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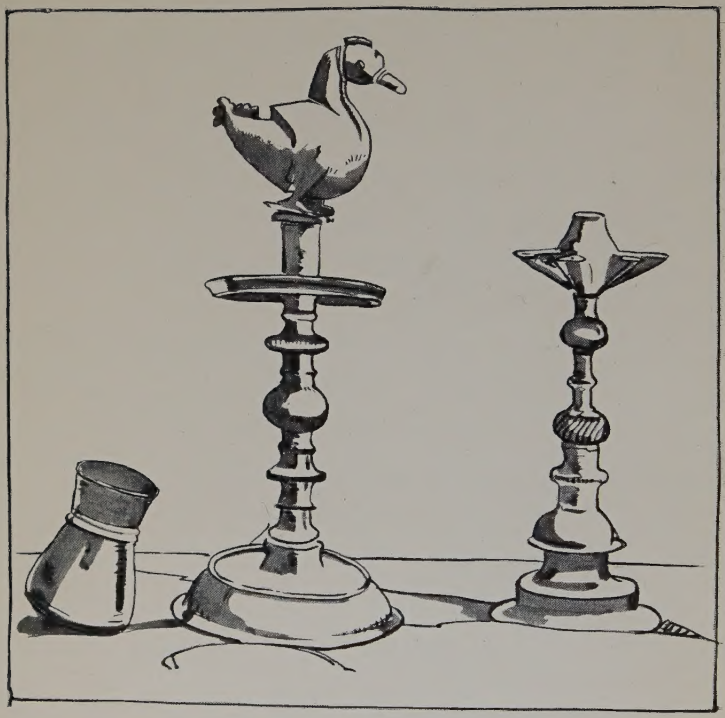
MOSUL AND ITS MINORITIES



Frontispiece

ONE OF THE IMAGES OF MELEK TAUS

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MOSUL
AND ITS MINORITIES

BY

HARRY CHARLES LUKE

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AUTHOR OF

'THE FRINGE OF THE EAST,' 'THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES,'
'ANATOLICA,' ETC.

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TO
MY WIFE

PREFACE

A JOURNEY in the Near and Middle East, begun in the autumn of 1907 in the company of my friend Mr. Harry Pirie-Gordon and designed to be prolonged to Urfa, Mardin and Mosul, was forcibly curtailed in the spring of 1908, after we had crossed the Euphrates at Tell Ahmar,[1] by Ibrahim Pasha, the chief of the Milli Kurds. For many years before the Great War this truculent bandit and his men, barely camouflaged under the title of "Hamidieh Irregular Cavalry," which they had extorted from the weakness of 'Abdul Hamid II., terrorized from their capital of Viranshehir (the Roman Antoninopolis) the north-western stretches of the Jezireh, and arbitrarily closed, at their caprice, the territory under their control to European travellers. It was not until 1924 that circumstances enabled me to complete, by a visit to the Province of Mosul made from Jerusalem, the voyage thus interrupted sixteen years previously.

Since those days Mosul has acquired a new importance in the eyes of the world, and of this revived

[1] *Cf.* the present writer's *The Fringe of the East*, Macmillan, London, 1913, ch. xiii.

interest in its affairs the " Minorities of Mosul " may well bespeak a share. The aim of this little book, written in the scanty leisure of a busy official life, is to help to make these singularly interesting peoples better known to English readers, and to win for them, if possible, some additional measure of sympathy in the difficult times through which they are passing. The arrival in England of the young Patriarch of the Nestorians, Mar Shimun XXI., for the completion of his education, cannot fail to stimulate a desire for increased knowledge of his gallant and sorely tried Assyrians.

Several of the chapters that follow have appeared in *The Times* ; and I have to thank the editor of that journal for his kindness in allowing me to reproduce here those which have enjoyed the hospitality of his columns, together with the maps, with which they were illustrated.

Most of the illustrations of the book are taken from my own photographs ; but I would express to Mr. Humphrey Bowman, C.B.E., formerly Director of Education in 'Iraq and now holding the same office in Palestine, my thanks for allowing me to use the sketches of Melek Taus, kindly made by Mrs. Arthur Bowman for reproduction here from two unique photographs in his possession. I have to thank Mr. Jerome Farrell, M.C., who accompanied my wife and myself on this journey, for the photograph of

Rabban Hormizd, as well as for much valuable information; and Canon H. Danby for the loan of the block reproduced on page 84. Finally, I must record my gratitude to Mr. H. I. Lloyd, O.B.E., M.C., Administrative Inspector of the Province, and to Mrs. Lloyd, for the hospitality they were so good as to extend to us in their charming Mosul house, delightful with its colonnaded court and with its view across the Tigris to the mounds of Nineveh and the tomb of the Prophet Jonah.

H. C. L.

Easter, 1925.

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CHAPTER I

THE WAY THITHER

PALESTINE and Syria, bounded on the west by the blue waters of the Mediterranean, on the east by the grey and stony sea of the great Syrian desert, have been likened to a peninsula, narrow and mountainous as is Italy. And indeed this comparison is more than mere fancy. For as truly as Jaffa and Haifa, Beirut and Tripoli are the Amalfi and Naples, the Leghorn and Genoa of this Italy of the Near East, so are Damascus and Homs, Hama and Aleppo its Bari and Ancona, its Rimini and Venice. They are its sally-ports to a vast expanse, to a veritable inland sea, where clusters of black Beduin tents tack hither and thither across the sand and the steppe like black-sailed argosies across the Adriatic.

The first stage of our journey to Mosul lay along the high ridge, the backbone of this peninsula, from Jerusalem to Nazareth ; the next, along the western coast, from Haifa to Beirut. Of Beirut all that need be said is that it is a Levantine Marseilles, an emporium of trade and a place of middlemen, inhabited,

as was once Marseilles, by keen-witted Phoenicians. Beirut, when it yet lay under the Turks, was singularly lacking in the charm of which few eastern towns are wholly devoid ; and now, with the material improvements wrought under French administration, it has become more like Marseilles than ever. Only in its background has it the advantage over its French counterpart, for even the Alpes Maritimes, charming as they are, cannot compete with the mulberry-clad, snow-clad Lebanon. Yet here, too, the parallel is perpetuated. From one of the Lebanese foothills above the little port of Juneh there towers, like Notre Dame de la Garde over the Gulf of Lyons, a colossal statue of the Virgin, embracing in her benediction that once busy Phoenician coast, that hot-house of Asiatic gods, from Berytus itself, past the river Adonis, to the tombs and temples of pagan Byblos, which is now Jebeil. Here, in this narrow strip of coast between the Lebanon and the sea, foregathered the divinities of the ancient East, native Phoenician gods and gods from distant Babylonia, before they extended their sway into the West and undermined with their exotic rituals the pristine virtue of Greece and Rome. From these hills and valleys did Baal and Melkarth, did Eshmun and Resef-Mikal, divine Astarte and her adored Tammuz look westward at Cypriote Olympus, faintly discernible on the horizon ; from this shore, leaving their uncouth eastern names

behind them, traverse the intervening sea and burst upon the Hellenic world as Zeus and Herakles, Asklepios and Apollo, Aphrodite and beauteous Adonis. In the lovely valley—midway between Beirut and Jebeil—that bears his name, was born the lad Adonis, the beloved of Aphrodite, and in the selfsame valley was gored to death by a jealous boar. Through the thickets and brambles that fringed the stream Aphrodite hastened to him, hearing his cries, and from her bleeding feet there sprang the wild rose that even now " fledges the river's lip " with its delicate pink. From the deeper sanguine of the life-blood of Adonis, ebbing away as he lay in the arms of his goddess, grew the tender anemone ; while yearly, in the spring, the river runs red in memory of his untimely end.

" Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured
The Syrian maidens to lament his fate
In amorous ditties all a summer's day,
While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea, supposed with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded."

There are some who would ascribe this phenomenon to a mineral deposit in the soil, carried down from the mountains by the winter rains ; but I prefer to think with Milton and the villagers of Afqa that the stream, at the return of the season of life,

is incarnadined by the ichor of its eponymous hero.

> καὶ ποταμοὶ κλαίοντι τὰ πένθεα τᾶς Ἀφροδίτας,
> καὶ παγαὶ τὸν Ἄδωνιν ἐν ὤρεσι δακρύοντι,
> ἄνθεα δ' ἐξ ὀδύνας ἐρυθαίνεται, ἃ δὲ Κυθήρα
> πάντας ἀνὰ κναμώς, ἀνὰ πᾶν νάπος οἰκτρὸν ἀείδει
> 'αἰαῖ τὰν Κυθέρειαν, ἀπώλετο καλὸς Ἄδωνις.'

" And the rivers bewail the sorrows of Aphrodite, and the wells are weeping Adonis on the mountains. The flowers flush red for anguish, and Cytherea through all the mountain-knees, through every dell doth shrill the piteous dirge :

> ' Woe, woe for Cytherea, he hath perished,
> The lovely Adonis.' "

In this corner of the East, as in many another, Christianity and paganism are never far apart : in the words of the brothers Tharaud " le son aigu des flûtes et les cymbales païennes accompagnent toujours ici, pour une oreille attentive, le tintement des cloches." So it is not surprising if we pass within a few miles from memories of laughter-loving Aphrodite and her " rose-cheek'd " youth to those of the Lady Melisende, inspiring from the turrets of her castle of Tripoli in the knights and poets of the West a very different passion. In the love of the *Princesse Lointaine*, the queen of Outremer, an intangible, ethereal love that could never be realized, Jaufré Rudel and his Troubadour successors

expressed the very essence of what poetry underlay the spirit of the Crusades. It was a legend, if you will, a figment of poets' imaginations, a melancholy if beautiful illusion ; but it marked what change had been wrought in the minds of men since they celebrated, in this very region, the amorous adventures of the Paphian goddess. " Abide with me, Adonis," laments, in the words of the Greek poet, the sorrowing Aphrodite, " hapless Adonis abide, that this last time of all I may possess thee, that I may cast myself about thee, and lips with lips may mingle. Awake, Adonis, for a little while, and kiss me yet again, the latest kiss. Nay kiss me but for a moment, but the lifetime of a kiss, till from thine inmost soul into my lips, into my heart, thy life-breath ebb, and till I drain thy sweet love-philtre, and drink down all thy love."

Compare with this passionate outburst the mystic longing of the gentle Prince of Blaye :

" Jamais d'amour je ne jouirai, si je ne jouis de cet amour lointain, car femme plus noble ni meilleure je ne connais, ni de près, ni de loin. Sa valeur est si pure et si parfaite que je voudrais, pour elle, être appelé captif, là-bas, au pays des Sarrasins."

" Car c'est chose suprême
D'aimer sans qu'on vous aime,
D'aimer toujours, quand même,
Sans cesse,

D'une amour incertaine,
Plus noble d'être vaine . . .
Et j'aime la lointaine
Princesse !

" Car c'est chose divine
D'aimer lorsqu'on devine,
Rêve, invente, imagine
A peine. . . .
Le seul rêve intéresse.
Vivre sans rêve, qu'est-ce ?
Et j'aime la Princesse
Lointaine ! "

But this is a digression into scenes of previous wanderings, for which I must ask the reader's indulgence. On this occasion we travelled no farther along the Phoenician coast than Beirut, whence we turned eastward to climb the passes of the Lebanon, still deep in snow. Leaving on our left Brumana with its umbrella pines and its Maronite monasteries, we passed Aley, the summer station of the French Administration, a cluster of villas, cafés and casinos. Next came 'Ain Sofar, with more casinos, whither wealthy Syrians resort to gamble when the dog-days drive them mountainwards from the moist and torrid coast ; and soon afterwards we attained, at Murad, the highest point on the Damascus road. At Shtora, famous for its wines, we enter the rich plain of the Biqa', the true Coelesyria of the ancients, and then, by the pass which separates

Hermon from Anti-Libanus, thread our way into Damascus.

I do not propose to inflict on the reader a description of Damascus, which revealed itself to me, revisiting it after the lapse of sixteen years, as more than ever a metropolis of the desert. Intermingled with the usual barrack-like offices of a Turkish provincial capital, with the cafés and cinemas of post-war development, with the typical Syrian dwellings, tasteless boxes that are all windows, with the true Damascene houses of blank outer walls concealing beautiful *patios* and tinkling fountains, are thousands of mud and plaster hovels. Damascus looks, not towards the West, as does Beirut, but eastward to the Syrian desert and southward towards Mecca. The late Monsieur Maurice Barrès, in his *Enquête aux Pays du Levant*,[1] affected to have found that " à Damas se rencontrent, non pour tâcher de se détruire l'un l'autre, mais pour se comprendre et s'unir, l'Orient et l'Occident." I traverse that statement point-blank. In few oriental cities is the contrast between East and West brought into sharper relief, is the gulf wider, than in Damascus. Had Monsieur Barrès forgotten the events that led to the armed intervention, of which he was so proud, of Napoleon III. in 1860? Had he forgotten the genesis of the song " Partant pour la Syrie "? No,

[1] Paris, 1924.

the nucleus of Damascus, the focus of its mentality, is not the super-café built since the era of the French Mandate on the embankment of the Barada; it is now, as it has ever been, the great Mosque of the Omayyad Khalifs.

What al-Azhar is to Cairo, what the Haram al-Sherif is to Moslem Jerusalem, that is the Omayyad Mosque to Damascus. It is also the city's only outstanding monument, and, to be properly appreciated, should be seen before Jerusalem. Its courtyard is noble, but it lacks the glorious spaciousness, the wide prospect of the Haram al-Sherif; the mosque itself, while more impressive, despite its restoration, than the 'Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, pales beside the quintessential beauty of the Dome of the Rock. I recall, as we went out of the mosque to continue our eastward journey, two small episodes. The first was a vision of the mosque attendants busily sweeping its carpets with branches of date-palm; the second, caught just outside the gate, one of an itinerant vendor of fruit polishing his lemons with a clothes-brush.

Two motor-routes traverse the Syrian desert from Damascus to the Euphrates, and disclose themselves to the traveller by the tracks of the cars, which have been plying backwards and forwards at regular intervals since the end of 1923. One route runs due east to Ramadi; the other, longer but more

CROSSING THE DESERT

THE MOSQUE OF NEBI SHÎT : MOSUL

interesting, first leads north-eastward to Palmyra, and thence south-eastward until it strikes the Euphrates at Hit. We followed the first route on our outward course, returning by the second; and nowhere else have I seen mirages so numerous and so deceptive as those which we pursued throughout the journey.

This Badiet al-Sham, this immense area of uncultivated land, which gradually widens towards the south until it merges in the sandy wastes of inner Arabia, is deserted, even by nomads, in the summer, but in the winter and early spring the rain and the dew combine to produce, here and there, enough pasture and moisture for occasional Beduin with their camels and their sheep. We spent one of our two nights in the desert in an encampment of these people, leaning against high-pommelled camel-saddles around a fire of dried thorn while our hosts, who were of the Rowalla, smoked and asked news of the Khalifate and 'Iraq and Ibn Saud and the Hejaz Treaty. Declining the proffered sheep, we sipped bitter but aromatic Bedu coffee, a thin yellowish-green liquid that is certainly more cardamom than coffee and is so strong a stimulant that only the bottom of the cup is filled, as the women of the Sheikh's family keeked curiously over the camel-hair partition that separated their side of the tent from the guest-chamber. The Rowalla, an important branch of the large federation of clans called

the Aneiza, spend the summer by the Meadow Lakes of Damascus, the famous *Ager Damascenus*, and the winter roaming the desert. It is doubtless in Damascus, at the hands of enterprising Armenian dentists, that the men cause their front teeth, however perfect they may be, to be plated with gold in the manner of American negro pugilists, a form of vanity that is becoming all too common among the Arabs, in the desert as well as in the sown. Smiles that are not even chryselephantine, smiles of unrelieved gold now flash from the mouths of turbaned and sandalled men in flowing robes, and are regrettable enough when encountered in the *suqs* of a town. Still more were they to be deplored in these black tents of Kedar, two hundred miles from any settled habitation. Even mid-desert is no longer immune from the onslaughts of western civilization; and young Shami ibn Sha'lan, the Sheikh's nine-year-old son, who did the honours of the camp in his father's absence with the dignity and *savoir faire* of a grown man, combined with something of the haughtiness of a spoiled child, betrayed an uncanny knowledge of the latest types of motor-car, gained from close observation of those which travel between Damascus and Baghdad.

As we began to near the Euphrates we occasionally crossed or ran parallel with the ploughed furrow, which indicates the air-route from 'Amman. Bird

life here, as throughout the desert, was singularly varied and abundant. Sand-grouse were so numerous that many were caught on the radiator of our car, and we must have put up millions in the course of the journey across the desert and back. Bustards were not uncommon ; and it was pleasant to see red-legged snipe drinking daintily, after rain, at the edge of some shallow *wadi*. On our last morning we ran into a herd of gazelle, that must have numbered not far short of a thousand, a beautiful sight as the graceful little beasts scampered across the desert, the whites of their tails bobbing up and down in the clear light of the " Persian dawn."

A night at Ramadi and the resumption of our journey on the following day brought us to Baghdad in the afternoon, in time to leave by the evening train for Qala't Sharqat, the end of the railway that leads towards Mosul. For, although the Germans endowed Mosul, somewhat prematurely, with a railway station, no railway has reached it yet ; and travellers from Baghdad leave the train at Qala't Sharqat, where once stood Asshur, the city of Tiglath-Pileser, and now stand the temporary huts of a temporary railway terminus. Here we embarked in one of the agile American motor-cars, which meet the trains, and traversed, for the eighty miles that separated us from Mosul, a steppe covered with scarlet tulips, mauve anemones and small wild iris of a watery

blue. Some five hours of bounding over the wilds of the Jezireh [1] brought us, towards evening, to the outskirts of Mosul, where, in a field, some Nestorian boys were playing football. And among them, good lad, was his Holiness Mar Shimun XXI., Katholikos and Patriarch of the East, who, having " held the Chair " of Mar Addai [2] since 1920, has now attained the age of sixteen years.

[1] Before 'Iraq became the name of the new kingdom it denoted the southern half of Mesopotamia, the flat, low-lying, alluvial plain between Baghdad and the Persian Gulf. The northern half of the land between the two rivers was called al-Jezireh, " the Island."

[2] S. Thaddaeus ; *cf.* p. 56.

CHAPTER II

MOSUL: THE LIVING CITY

THERE are few parts of the world (outside the Caucasus, than which there is no more intricate mosaic of races) so baffling to the ethnographic map-maker as the district which was once known as the Vilayet of Mosul. Not only do there dwell within its limits multitudinous sects, as little known, in many cases, as they are ancient; it is rare to find, as one ranges the great Mosul plain, two consecutive villages peopled by the same race, speaking the same tongue, worshipping the same God. In Mosul town and in the plain there is a preponderance of Arabs; in the mountains to the north and east, of Kurds. But both in city, plain and mountains are scattered the remnants of other peoples, some of whom have known periods of great glory, in singular contrast to their precarious present; while others have had so obscure a history that it is difficult even now to unravel their origins and the genesis of their beliefs. But of all these minorities it is safe to say that they have suffered tribulation and oppression, have under-

gone martyrdom for Christ, for Jehovah and even, unlikely as it may sound, for the Devil. It was not without justification that Dr. Wigram entitled his delightful book on this remarkable region *The Cradle of Mankind*. The peoples encountered therein, the languages they speak, the scripts and kalendars they employ, take one back to the early ages of civilization, to stages in the world's history which now seem strangely remote.

You find here, dwelling among the Arab and Kurdish majorities, a great variety of Christians: Nestorians (whom some call Assyrians) and Jacobites, with their corresponding Uniate branches, Chaldaeans and Syrian Catholics. You find occasional Armenians, although the beginnings of the Armenian homelands lie farther to the north, around and above Lake Van. You find, in the Kurdish uplands, survivals of the Babylonian captivity in the shape of villages of Aramaic-speaking Jews; and Kurdish chieftains still own their Jews, as they own, or owned, their Nestorians. You find, both to the west and north-east of Mosul, a gentle, long-suffering people, the Yezidis, whose principal divinity is none other than Satan. You find Shebeks, a dim agricultural tribe, who may be a sect of Kurdish Shiahs but have an odd dialect and no mosques, and are believed by their neighbours to be a survival of one of the great Mongol invasions, a living relic of Hulagu or Timur-

lenk. You find, too, in Mosul, families of Mandaeans or "Christians of S. John the Baptist," a sect of silversmiths, whose beliefs may be traced, as we shall see, to those of the ancient worshippers of the moon. And, although you do not find Turks, you will meet, if you follow the old caravan route from Mosul to Baghdad, the Turkoman colonies which the Turks planted along the strategic points of the route to hold Persians and Kurds in check, as they planted colonies of Circassians and Chechens on the marches of their Arab provinces. Turkish place-names, such as Gyöl-tepé and Altun Kiöprü, indicate these Turkoman settlements; and the Turkoman dialect of Turkish combines with several varieties of Kurdish, with Arabic, with East Syriac and West Syriac and their parent Aramaic to create in this corner of the ancient world an amazing medley of Turanian, Aryan and Semitic speech.

Mosul is one of several towns once Ottoman, whose names have given words to the English language. From Mosul (through the French *mousseline*) we derive the word muslin, as we owe shallot to Ascalon, baldaquin to Baghdad, bedlam to Bethlehem, currant to Corinth, quince to Cydonia, damson and damask to Damascus, fustian to Fustat, the Cairo of the Omayyads. It is true that the weavers of Mosul no longer produce the delicate fabric, which once spread abroad the fame of their city;

the bazaars are better stocked, nowadays, with meat and vegetables and fruit than with the products of the loom. On the other hand, this capital of the Jezireh has acquired, since the war, a new importance in the eyes of the world; the re-arrangement of

frontiers in the Middle East has rescued it from the provincial obscurity in which it languished under the Turks.

Mosul resembles politicians in that it inspires in those who know it either great affection or very much the contrary. People hate the place, or they like it very much. The late Sir Mark Sykes detested Mosul. His eye, which dwelt, as a rule, indulgently

enough on the cities of the "Dar al-Islam," was offended by its aspect as deeply as was his nose by its smells. And as his literary qualifications included in an unusual degree the gift of powerful and sustained invective, he leaves his reader in no doubt as to his feelings. There are pages of *The Caliph's Last Heritage* devoted to a castigation of the modern Nineveh as fierce as any which its predecessor evoked from the minor Prophets. "This town of mud and mortar": "this sink of disease and horror"; "foul nest of corruption, vice, disorder" —these are among the descriptions he applies to it; and in *The Cradle of Mankind* Dr. Wigram, although more tolerant of its appearance, denounces its climate and the probity of its Town Councillors with almost equal vigour. I can readily understand that in the minds of those who lived, winter and summer, in the Mosul of 'Abdul Hamid, the city's more unpleasant characteristics may well have remained uppermost. Yet to one who, like myself, has known it neither in the discomfort of the hot weather nor in the depressing conditions of Ottoman administration, but in the early spring of 1924, it presents itself in a different guise, and affords, with its keen, bracing mountain air and delightfully vernal vegetation, a pleasing contrast with steamy, stuffy Baghdad.

Miss E. S. Stevens, too, takes in a recent work [1]

[1] *By Tigris and Euphrates*, London, 1923.

a less dreary view of the amenities of the place. After referring to the zeal for reform which British rule has succeeded in implanting in the civic breast of the Moslawis, she remarks that Mosul, in its newly achieved cleanliness and airiness, in the general aspect of its better quarters, suggests Italy rather than the East. I can think of certain cities of southern Italy which would render a comparison of this sort none too flattering to Mosul; moreover, although I agree with Miss Stevens on the subject of Mosul's cleanliness, I know few eastern towns of its size that are so thoroughly oriental. Its older quarters are not only oriental in character but Assyrian: and even its newest buildings, even Nineveh Street—that broad, straight swath cut across the town from east to west, bisecting in its undeviating path slums and palaces, coffee-shops and convents—even Nineveh Street, I say, preserves most creditably the traditional features of Mosuliote architecture. There did, indeed, suggest itself to me a resemblance to an Italian town, but on grounds other than those adduced by Miss Stevens. "Every minaret in the place," says Wigram, "has a conspicuous kink in it, except the principal one, which has two"; and these *flèches* of mellow brick, slanting towards every point of the compass, recalled to me Bologna with its towers of Asinelli and Garisenda leaning in opposite directions. The explanation

which is given of the double kink in the minaret of the Great Mosque betrays that noble disregard of chronology common to Moslem legends. As the Prophet Mohammed passed over Mosul on his celestial flight the minaret bowed itself in reverence, and could only recover its balance after its top joint had been given a contrary inclination.

The traditional features of the architecture of Mosul are not only attractive, but are clearly of extreme antiquity. Architecturally Mosul is not a Turkish and not an Arab town. Its houses have neither the overhanging eaves and green shutters, the kiosks supported on rafters of cedar, which are characteristic of Anatolia and of European Turkey, nor are they the tall narrow four and five-storied stone structures of the Arabian peninsula and of such Palestinian towns as Hebron and Nablus. Nor again are they the rambling brick buildings of Baghdad and Basra. The typical Mosul street is a long winding lane bounded by walls of *jess*,[1] walls unpierced by windows but faced, as a rule, with the speckled grey alabastrine or gypsum marble which is a speciality of Mosul. Only the sculptured portal —often very beautiful—breaks the monotony of the exterior, but the great expanses of blank wall conceal interiors that would surprise those who have not seen the houses of Damascus and Andalusia. The

[1] The Mosul building material of rubble and lime cement.

houses of Mosul, almost without exception, are built round a double-storied *patio*, carried, by means of arches suggestive of the Italian Renaissance, on pillars of alabaster. Everything is paved with alabaster ; and slabs of alabaster, richly carved, line the inner walls of the colonnades. On one side of the cloister there is generally an elaborate arched recess, where the family take their *keif* during the hot weather. In the richer houses a fountain occupies the middle of the court (Moslawis, like other Orientals, delight in the sound of plashing water), and the overflow is carried through it in runnels of the ubiquitous alabaster, watering in its course beds of iris, violets and roses. The rooms are large and lofty and barrel-vaulted : and, if the fabric is seldom enduring, the type of construction has persisted for the best part of three thousand years. For the pylon-like tapering of the houses, the plan of the courtyards and the facing of sculptured panels of alabaster are features common to the dwellings of ancient Assyria ; the excavations at Nineveh, at Nimrud and at Khorsabad have disclosed a type of house which Mosul has never ceased to build. I must not omit to mention certain stately houses on the very bank of the Tigris, whose courts open on to the river in tiers of graceful *loggias*, like those of a *palazzo* on the Grand Canal.

The alabaster of Mosul and its treatment have

created a type of decoration common to churches and mosques alike. The straight arch is almost universal; and there is little in the arches and voussoirs of the Jacobite Church of Mar Tuma or the Church of al-Tahira (the Immaculate) of the Syrian Catholics to distinguish them from those, let us say, of the Mosque of Aun al-Din. They are extremely interesting, these Mosul churches, with their atria, their narthexes and their deeply undercut lintels, sculptured in a manner which suggested to one of the old Arab geographers a comparison with the intricacies of wood carving. The style is peculiar to Mosul and its neighbourhood, and is seen at its best in Mar Behnam, a monastery, now belonging to the Syrian Catholics, in the Mosul plain near the mounds of Nimrud. Another noteworthy church in the town is Mar Shimun Kepa (S. Simon the Rock), which lies well below the level of the street and thereby proclaims its antiquity. This church was originally Nestorian, but passed, when the Nestorians of the Mosul plain went over to Rome after the middle of the sixteenth century and became Chaldaean Uniates, to the new body. Its baptistery is one of the oldest ecclesiastical remains in Mosul, and in its sunken court lie many ancient tombstones bearing East Syriac inscriptions. The court is also, or was, the burial place of the house of 'Abd al-Jelil, a family, originally Christian, which has long

been the leader of the Moslem aristocracy of Mosul. For generations the Jelilis were the hereditary and semi-independent Pashas of Mosul, owning but a nominal allegiance to the central Government of Stambul. It was only when Sultan Mahmud II., the Louis XI. of Turkey, broke the power of the great vassals in the first half of the nineteenth century that the province was brought under the direct authority of the Porte, and that the Jelilis made way for governors appointed from Constantinople.

Of a different type is the Mosque of Nebi Shît, situated on the southern outskirts of the town, not far from the vast square around which are built the barracks and the Sarai. Here is shown the tomb of Seth, the son of Adam, a Patriarch who has contrived to surround himself with a mass of Jewish, Christian and Moslem tradition and to give his name to one of the numerous Gnostic sects. Is it on this account, or is it by chance, that his tomb is surmounted by a cluster of fluted conical spires, such as are characteristic of another sect with Gnostic affinities, the Yezidis, rather than by the usual Saracenic domes ?

Elsewhere, scattered about the town, are cupolas and minarets, whose tiles of turquoise blue combine happily with the mellow tones of the brickwork they cover. Many, indeed, of the tiles have crumbled away, leaving gaps of brown on the sky-blue surface,

but in their place have come the pigeon and the stork, both pious birds and pilgrims to Mecca, to build their nests and lead their friendly lives here in these sacred courts and among the haunts of men. In Mosul, as in many another eastern city and district, we find the most important of the ancient buildings associated with one particular ruler. Thus, among the *tells* of Assyria, the mightiest monuments are popularly ascribed to Semiramis, the great Queen Shahmiram ; those of Jerusalem, as they are Jewish, Christian or Moslem, to Herod, the Empress Helena, or the Khalif 'Omar ; the mediaeval convents and castles of Georgia, without exception, to Queen Tamara. The noble Seljuq mosques of Konia are attributed (and here fact and tradition coincide) to Sultan 'Ala al-Dîn Kai Kobad I., " Glory of the World and of the Faith " ; and similarly, in Mosul, the builder *par excellence*, the local Justinian, is the Atabeg Badr al-Dîn Lulu, " the Pearl Sultan," who ruled in Mosul in the middle of the thirteenth century, just before the Tatar inrush submerged in the Mongol flood Mosul and Baghdad alike. Sultan Lulu deserves well of his capital, for he enriched it with many a delightful mosque and shrine. The Mosque of Aun al-Dîn is his handiwork, and so is the beautiful tomb of the Imam Yahya, which overhangs the banks of the Tigris by the north-east bastion of the city walls. And hard by stands what

is left of the king's palace, the Qal'at Lulu, a singularly graceful ruin, to which there still adheres a fragment of its beautiful stucco decoration.

The Arabic form of Mosul is al-Mausil,[1] a word meaning "the meeting-place" or "the place of connexion"; and the town is in truth, like the province, a meeting-place of languages and creeds. The majority of the population is Moslem and is composed of Arabs and some Kurds, but includes no Turks; the minority comprises Jews, an occasional Mandaean and Yezidi and, above all, a great variety of Christian sects. Perhaps the most agreeable feature of the Moslems of Mosul is their dress. Moslawi notables, when they do not garb themselves *alla franca*, affect silken *qumbazes* of soft and pleasing colours and *abas* of the finest camlet or wool; and, if there is a touch of effeminacy about their attire, theirs is the only dress I have encountered in the East which resembles even remotely the costumes we are accustomed to see in oriental plays at home. Sir Mark Sykes gives his opinion of them in the following characteristic passage: "Eloquent, cunning, excitable, and cowardly, they present to my mind one of the most deplorable pictures one can see in the East: diseased from years of foul living, contemptuous of villagers, with all the loathsome

[1] The "s" in Mosul is hard. It is wrong to pronounce the name as if it were spelled "Moazle."

A HANGING IN MOSUL

contempt of a stunted cockney for a burly yokel; able to quote poetry in conversation . . . idle beyond all hope, vicious as far as their feeble bodies will admit; ready to riot and slay for the sake of fanaticism as long as they are in no danger; detesting Europeans with a bigoted, foolish, senseless hatred; insolent yet despicable; ready to cry 'Kafir' to a stranger and fly ere his head is turned. With minds of mudlarks and the appearance of philosophers, they depress and disgust the observer."

It may well be that Mark Sykes regarded the Moslem townsmen of Mosul with an unduly jaundiced eye, but it cannot be denied that their cleverness is of a superficial kind, and that there are among them those who are vain and in money matters grasping withal. During the war, when the Turkish troops massed about Mosul monopolized most of the foodstuffs of the country-side, provisions grew scarce in the town and meat became almost unprocurable. Deaths from starvation were of common occurrence, especially among children, and a man and his wife in their avarice opened a secret eating-house, where they cooked and sold the flesh of babies. In due course this ghoulish kitchen was discovered by the police, and the Turks, to their credit be it said, promptly hanged the pair, notwithstanding their strong aversion from executing Moslem women. There are, however, in Mosul, as in other Moslem

towns, families of great antiquity and long tradition ; and the Naqib al-Ashraf of Mosul, that is to say, the hereditary registrar of the descendants of the Prophet within the province, boasts a *firman* granted to a forbear by one of the Mongol Il-khans of the Middle Ages.

No account of Mosul can omit a reference to the generous fashion, in which town and province are endowed with Christian bishops. Antioch, with its six patriarchs, may claim a certain superiority, but it is a superiority which is only theoretical, as all six reside elsewhere ; Jerusalem, with four patriarchs and three bishops, not to mention the fifteen titular archbishops, who form the court of the Orthodox Patriarch, is better be-bishoped, both in theory and practice. But apart the Holy City and " the Metropolis and Eye of Christendom," Mosul must be *facile princeps* in the number of its Fathers in God, the more so as it is harbouring again, as we have seen, the Patriarchate of the Nestorians or Assyrians. How the late Mar Benjamin Shimun was driven by the Turks during the war from the Hakkiari Mountains,[1] where has been the seat of the Nestorian Patriarchs since they left Mosul some hundreds of years ago, how the present little Patriarch found himself, with some thousands of

[1] A quadrilateral bounded, roughly speaking, by the Tigris, the Greater Zab, the Persian frontier and Lake Van.

ܫ ܡܪ ܥܡܢܘܐܝܠ ܬܪܝܢ ܩܬܝܠܝܟܘܣ ܕܒܒܠ

Mar Emmanuel II., Patriarch of Babylon

his people, a refugee in the erstwhile residence of his predecessors, will be related in subsequent chapters.[1]

Mosul's second Patriarch is the head of the Church formed from those Nestorians, who in the sixteenth century and after accepted the supremacy of the Pope and became Uniate. This Church has taken the name "Chaldaean," and its ruler, although he lives in the new Nineveh, rejoices in the sonorous title of Patriarch of Babylon. His Beatitude Mar Fmmanuel II. makes an impressive figure with his white beard, his scarlet cassock and gown, and the head-dress peculiar to the Chaldaean episcopacy and clergy, a flat band of shiny black satin wound so many times round a low Tunisian fez that it projects quite a hand-breadth from the head. The advantages which Rome had to offer in the shape of financial support, better educational facilities (through the admirable school of the Dominicans in Mosul) and, above all, the protection of a European Power as exercised through the French Consulate, proved powerful inducements to the Nestorians of Mosul and the villages of the plain to leave their ancient Church, crushed as it was between Turkish Pasha and Kurdish Agha. And so, only the highlanders of the almost inaccessible fastnesses and valleys of

[1] Mar Shimun XXI. himself arrived in England in January, 1925, for the completion of his education.

the Hakkiari Mountains have remained faithful to Mar Shimun, while the town and the populous villages about it have given their allegiance to his Grace of Babylon, taking their churches and endowments with them into their new obedience. The Apostolic Delegate of Mesopotamia, another of Mosul's prelates, while the direct spiritual chief of the Catholics " of the Latin rite " only, co-ordinates the activities of the Uniate Churches and provides their *liaison* with Rome.

The two other Churches represented in Mosul afford in a sense a parallel with the Nestorians and Chaldaeans, for one of them is the old Monophysite Church of the Jacobites, and the other its recent Uniate offshoot, the Syrian Catholic Church. Each of these Churches is ruled by a Patriarch of Antioch, the Uniate living in Beirut and the Jacobite having resided, until his recent expulsion by the Turks, at the monastery of Deir Za'feran near Mardin. Both Churches are represented in Mosul by bishops, of whom the Uniate, Mgr. Habra, a cultivated man of the world with two brothers established in England, is so popular with his people that a recent proposal to transfer him elsewhere evoked from his flock the threat (not infrequently made and sometimes carried out in the Eastern Churches) to go into schism if he were taken away. The Syrian Catholic clergy have borrowed the rimless tall hat, the καλήμαυκον of the

Mar Ignatius Elias III., Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch

Orthodox Church, on the crown of which their bishops wear, as a sign of their rank, a gold filigree button. Jacobite bishops, on the other hand, boast a head-dress peculiar to themselves. This consists of a large round swelling turban, made by covering a stiff canvas frame with ingeniously plaited spiral folds of black silk. Notwithstanding the fact that irreverent officers of the R.A.F. have been heard to describe it as a "wizardly bowler," and envious ladies as the last word in toques, it is an impressive and dignified head-piece, and it lends to its wearers, with their venerable beards, the air of an Old Testament patriarch.

There are in Mosul a few representatives of a strange sect, which, although it is not Christian, is also ruled by a dignitary who bears the title of bishop. This sect is as old as, possibly even older than that other tiny survival of remote antiquity, the Samaritans, and it may be described without exaggeration as not only, in all probability, the only surviving relic of Gnosticism, but as the only living link with the moon-worshippers of ancient Charran (Carrhae), the holy city of the moon-god Sin. Its members give to themselves in their own language, an Aramaic dialect written in a character resembling the old Palmyrene, the name *Mandai*, which means Gnostics, while in their intercourse with their Moslem neighbours they describe themselves as

Subbi or *Sabi'una*, that is, Baptists. This description is explained by the *leit-motif* of their ritual, which consists of constantly recurring baptisms and purifications by immersion; but it is used by the Mandaeans in their dealings with Moslems that they may qualify for the toleration extended by Islam to a long extinct sect of the same name, which is included in the Qoran among the "people of the Book." [1] With Christians, too, they have established a link by another of their designations, that of "Christians of S. John." Their baptismal practices are certainly older than the Baptist; but they have incorporated him, together with other Old and New Testament figures, in their singularly heterogeneous pantheon. The seventeenth century Jesuit missionaries, who first discovered their existence to the West, mistook them for the disciples of John, who had remained outside the Christian fold.

The complicated cosmogony and beliefs of the Mandaeans are based on Gnosticism, on that Gnosticism which derived its origin from the religion of ancient Babylon. The addiction of the Gnostics to sacraments and mysteries would explain the prominence given by the Mandaeans to their baptismal rites, would explain, too, their eucharist of bread and wine. It is also significant that the Mandaeans are

[1] By some it is held that the Sabians of the Qoran are the Sabaeans, the South Arabian subjects of the Queen of Sheba.

only to be found in the territory of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, in such cities as Mosul, Baghdad, Basra and, above all, Amara. They live, and have always lived in the cradle of their religious system, in the home of the veneration of the sun, moon and the five planets, which this remarkable survival has perpetuated into the twentieth century. When they pray they face the north star; astrology and horoscopes play a leading part in their lives. The importance they attach to baptism, to lustrations and ceremonial ablutions of all kinds compels them to dwell by a river or by running water; for with the Mandaeans baptism is not a rite that is performed once in a lifetime. If the Abyssinians keep Christmas once a month (except in March), the Mandaeans are baptized at least once a week. Not only do they submit to the ceremony every Sunday as a matter of ordinary routine. They undergo it whenever they have come in contact with persons or objects not ceremonially pure, which include even fruit and vegetables that have not been washed and butter that has been prepared by a non-Mandaean.

By trade they are either boat-builders or silversmiths, and in the latter capacity are favourably known throughout 'Iraq for their work in silver and gold inlaid with antimony. Their numbers are small. The seventeenth century Jesuits put them at 20,000 families, an estimate which seems unduly

high, since they have been immune from massacres and do not number now, according to Miss Stevens, more than a few thousand souls. Thus the part they play in the modern world is only that of a curiosity, of an *échantillon de religion*. It is perhaps worth remembering, however, that from their community there sprang, in the third century A.D., the teacher Mani, the founder of the Manichaeans, whose attempt to blend the doctrines of Zoroaster with those of Christ met for a while with wide success, and was carried on by sects which troubled the western Church until well into the Middle Ages and find an echo, even now, among some of the dissenting *Raskolniki* of Russia.

CHAPTER III

MOSUL: THE DEAD CITY

I

MESOPOTAMIAN towns have a tendency to migrate across the rivers on which they are situated. Thus Baghdad, which lay mainly, in the days of its glory under the 'Abbasid Khalifate, on the right bank of the Tigris, has now transferred its centre of gravity to the other side, while, in the case of Nineveh and Mosul, the process has been reversed. Looking eastward across the Tigris from Mosul you see, a few hundred yards beyond the river bank, the long low line of earthworks, which represent the walls of Mosul's great predecessor, culminating in the two mounds, Tell Qoyunjik and Tell Nebi Yunus—" the hill of the little sheep " and " the hill of the Prophet Jonah "—where stood the sumptuous residences of the Assyrian kings. Qoyunjik, with its palace of Sennacherib, has been extensively excavated by Layard and his successors, and has yielded a goodly treasure to the British Museum. But Nebi Yunus, if it has not always kept at bay the surreptitious

scratchings of the *antikaji*, has hitherto defied, immutably preserved in mortmain, the orderly investigations of the archaeologist. For a village inhabited by Turkoman and Arab Moslems crowns—picturesquely enough, I admit—this precious *tell*; and the Mosque of Nebi Yunus, a shrine of great sanctity in Moslem eyes, which crowns the village, surmounts, as ill luck has it, the very site of Esarhaddon's palace. The village has the grace to preserve, in its name Ninweh, the traditions of antiquity whose material vestiges it so impudently conceals; but why poor Jonah should be involved in this conspiracy of darkness is a mystery. For the mosque—assuming a Hebrew Prophet to be entitled to a mosque—is not his at all. It is an old Nestorian church, was, in fact, the cathedral of the Nestorians in the days when the predecessors of Mar Shimun had their seat in Mosul; and the occupant of the tomb, which is shown as that of the Prophet, is the Nestorian Patriarch John the Lame. This thirteenth century Christian worthy, observes Wigram, "now gets compensation for a life of hardship in his posthumous honours as a Jewish Prophet and Mussulman Saint"; but he is the innocent obstacle to the excavation of what must have been one of the greatest architectural efforts of the Assyrian Empire.

No more genuine, alas, than the body of Jonah are the remains of his whale, which are suspended over

the tomb. These consist of three sections of the " sword " (if that be the correct term) of a sword-fish, posing here as the backbone of the squeamish monster. Nevertheless, having known the place where the luckless prophet was thrown overboard and swallowed (Jaffa), as well as at least two of the places where he was rejected (Alexandretta and Bab-i-Yunus in Ayas Bay), I was glad to see his sepulture, vicarious though it be. But it is to be regretted that the custodians no longer provide him, as they did in Badger's time, with the gilt ewer and basin, the ball of French soap, the comb and the pair of scissors, which enabled him to perform his ablutions in the manner of the good Moslem he has now, perforce, become.

But Jonah has undergone in the course of ages a transformation far more profound. For he, who tended in his life-time to involve those about him in ill fortune, is regarded by the people of Ninweh in a very different light. The pilgrims to his shrine, and they are numerous, bring much grist to the village mill ; and no evidence would convince the modern Ninevites that these profitable bones have nothing to do with the son of Amittai. Indeed, considering the opinion which Jonah entertained of the old Nineveh and its inhabitants, considering his mortification when the Almighty " repented of the evil " and spared the city, his popularity in the neighbour-

hood is remarkable. So considerable is his influence that the fast, which was proclaimed to avert the doom he foretold for Nineveh, is still observed by the people of Mosul. Obeyed to the present day is the decree of the Assyrian King : " Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything ; let them not feed nor drink water." During three days the " Rogation of the Ninevites," as it is now called, unites in the month before Lent the many denominations of the district ; and we may judge how seriously it is kept from Badger's reference to the Nestorian priest, who, staying with him over the fast, tasted neither food nor water for seventy-two hours.

This fast and a few mounds of earth are the only living and visible links between the Nineveh of to-day and the Nineveh whose name filled the people of the ancient world with terror. The destruction of the city by the Medes and Babylonians in B.C. 608 was one of the greatest cataclysms in the history of mankind. Within the lifetime of men who had known it at the height of its power the mighty Assyrian Empire had utterly perished, had disappeared so completely from the face of the earth that Xenophon, marching two centuries later past the ruins of Nineveh, was not aware that they represented the great capital of Hither Asia. With few exceptions Assyria's grim and awe-inspiring monarchs are forgotten by those who now inhabit

their dominions. Only Semiramis, "woman of the palace of Samsi-Hadad, King of the World, King of Assyria," is recalled as Shahmiram, the legendary builder of every great work in the Land of the Two Rivers; and traditions of Nimrod survive, as we shall see, in the modern appellation of Calah. The name of Sargon, one of the founders though he was of Assyrian greatness, would be unknown in Mosul to-day were it not borne, by a remarkable coincidence worthy to be recorded, by the English Commandant of Police in that town. And what of Tiglath-Pileser I., who hunted wild bulls in the Lebanon and received from an anxious and subservient Pharaoh propitiatory gifts of crocodiles and hippopotami; of Sennacherib, who made of Nineveh the metropolis of the eastern world; of Esarhaddon, builder and conqueror; of the magnificent Asshur-bani-pal, who brought under the Assyrian sceptre Babylon, Elam and even Egypt, yet found the time to be a patron of learning and to enlarge the library of Sargon? Terrible were these scourges of mankind, who made war for the lust of slaughter, and could say in the pride of their hearts: "My face rejoiceth over ruins; in the satisfying of my wrath I have my pleasure"; and, again, "I slew one of every two. I built a wall before the great gates of the city; I flayed the chief men of the rebels, and I covered the wall with their skins. Some of them were enclosed alive in the

bricks of the wall, some of them were crucified on stakes along the wall ; I caused a great multitude of them to be flayed in my presence, and I covered the wall with their skins. I gathered together the heads in the forms of crowns, and their pierced bodies in the form of garlands."

Terrible indeed were these monsters in their generation ; but forgotten to-day are their pride and glory. Rather do they suggest to us the words of the Persian poet, who bids us think

> " How Sultan after Sultan with his pomp
> Abode his hour or two and went his way."

Over the grass-grown site of the city, whence were wont to issue " the captains and rulers " of blood-thirsty Assyria, there now wander lazily a few shep-herds with their flocks. And the fat-tailed sheep, as they browse peacefully across hillock and mound and ditch, are fulfilling to the letter the curse of the Prophet Zephaniah :

" He . . . will make Nineveh a desolation and dry like a wilderness.

And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations . . .

How is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in ! Every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand."

II

In the region that lies between the Tigris and the Lesser Zab have been enacted some of the decisive episodes in the history of Asia. A vassal-state of the Parthian Kings under the name of Adiabene (Hadiab), this tract of country was an asylum, under the tolerant Arsacids, for Christian refugees from the Roman persecutions, and became in this way one of the sources of the later "Church of the East." In the middle of this land, between the two Zabs, the Kurdish town of Erbil surmounts and encompasses the *tell* of Arbela,[1] where the last Darius stored his treasure before he was overthrown by Alexander on the field of Gaugamela, twenty miles away. Here, two generations previously, Xenophon had assumed command of the Greek mercenaries of the defeated Cyrus the Younger, and organized their masterly retreat through the country of the Kurds and other hostile mountaineers to the friendly coast of Pontus. And here, in a yet earlier age, lay the core, the heart of the Assyrian Empire. The city of Nimrud, which was Calah, situated near the apex of the triangle of land formed by the confluence of the

[1] Arbela is the classical form of the Assyrian Arba-ilu ("the Four Gods"), the great sanctuary of the goddess Ishtar. Erbil is the only Assyrian settlement of importance that has retained its original name and has been continuously inhabited to the present day.

Greater Zab and the Tigris, preceded even Qoyunjik and Nebi Yunus as the royal residence of the Assyrian kings, and is included by Layard, together with Khorsabad and Keremleis, within the precincts of Greater Nineveh.

"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.

He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.

And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah."

Our way to Nimrud took us, first of all, to the bank of the Greater Zab, the Lycus of the ancients, and we lunched by the waters which had engulfed in their thousands the troops of Darius as they fled before the cavalry of Alexander. Then we journeyed through miles of undulating barley-fields until there loomed in sight the *ziggurat* that surmounts Calah, now Nimrud, the city of Shalmaneser I. Even more than Qoyunjik has Nimrud enriched, through the labours of Layard, the Assyrian collections of the British Museum. It has also more to offer to the eyes of the visitor. From the pits and trenches of Layard's excavations there emerge quite a dozen or so of well-preserved Assyrian gateways, formed by

Assyrian Gateway, Nimrud

Melek Nimrud

pairs of human-headed bulls or lions sculptured from the local grey marble, their widely receding wings beautifully incised with cuneiform inscriptions. Scattered over the site are fragments of inscribed bricks; and a large depression in the ground reveals, laid bare from the waist upwards, the colossal stone statue of an Assyrian god or king. There is something very impressive about this half-buried giant, this *Melek Nimrud* ("King Nimrod"), as he is known to the nomads of the neighbourhood, and something rather pathetic. As he stands there helpless, revealed to the vulgar gaze of men, he seems to appeal mutely to be covered again by the sheltering earth, to be protected from insult and defacement at the hands of Arab urchins.

But we know from Layard why the Arabs do not love Melek Nimrud. For this is the story of the origin of the palace of Calah as related to him by a Sheikh of the Jehesh in his employ. "The palace," said the Sheikh, "was built by Athur, the Kiayah, or lieutenant of Nimrod. Here the holy Abraham, peace be with him! cast down and brake in pieces the idols which were worshipped by the unbelievers. The impious Nimrod, enraged at the destruction of his gods, sought to slay Abraham, and waged war against him. But the prophet prayed to God, and said, 'Deliver me, O God, from this man, who worships stones, and boasts himself to be the lord of

all beings,' and God said to him, ' How shall I punish him ? ' And the prophet answered ' To Thee armies are as nothing, and the strength and power of men likewise. Before the smallest of thy creatures will they perish.' And God was pleased at the faith of the prophet, and he sent a gnat, which vexed Nimrod night and day, so that he built himself a room of glass in yonder palace, that he might dwell therein, and shut out the insect. But the gnat entered also, and passed by his ear into his brain, upon which it fed, and increased in size day by day, so that the servants of Nimrod beat his head with a hammer continually, that he might have some ease from his pain ; but he died after suffering these torments for four hundred years."

III

Before returning from Mosul to Baghdad I had the good fortune to visit, by aeroplane, the dead city of Hatra. Fifty miles to the south-west of Mosul, surrounded on all sides by what is now uninhabited steppe but was once fertile agricultural land, is the ancient town, which the Parthians raised to the status of a powerful fortress, designed to protect their western frontier against the legions of Rome. The broad expanse of country, which I surveyed as we left Mosul behind us, once a part of the great granary of the ancient world, was now a desert, on which not a living soul was to be seen. Remarkable was the

contrast between this immense wilderness and, rising abruptly from its midst, the massive remains of a great stone city. The bird's-eye view of Hatra obtained from the air enabled one to see clearly the plan of the town, its moat, its outer wall and regularly placed bastions, its inner citadel and public buildings. There is nothing light about the architecture of Hatra : it is solid and heavy rather than graceful. The walls of the buildings are immensely thick ; the buildings themselves lofty and substantial. Of decoration there is not much to be seen : its most original feature is a series of stone heads, carved on the inner walls of a hall in what was presumably the palace. In the battles, whereby the Sassanids overthrew their Parthian suzerains and took their place on the imperial throne of Persia, Hatra was destroyed, to be inhabited no more ; and its walls and arches now emerge from the surrounding desert like the ribs of camels from the sands of the Sahara.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEPARATION OF THE CHURCHES

As the ensuing four chapters of this book will treat of the eastern Churches represented in the lands about Mosul, and will necessarily refer to the manner in which Nestorians and Monophysites broke away, by their non-acceptance of the doctrines promulgated by one or other of the Oecumenical Councils, from what was up to the time of their separation the Church Universal, it may serve to make their position towards the great Churches of the East and the West more easily intelligible if I attempt to explain very briefly how Orthodox, Roman Catholics and the Separated Churches fit into the general scheme of the ecclesiastical world.

The underlying theory of the Christian Church as gradually, after the Apostolic age, it assumed organized form, was that of its oneness, its non-divisibility. All communicants belonged to the one Church, catholic, orthodox and universal; those who refused to conform to her doctrines were outside her gates, schismatics cut off from her

communion. As time went on and theological speculation increased, the Church found it necessary to define and promulgate her teaching by means of Oecumenical or General Councils, composed of bishops representing all parts of the Christian world ; and, until the fifth century, despite minor and fleeting schisms, one creed was used everywhere and unity was maintained. Then, in 431, came the third General Council, that of Ephesus, which was rejected by the followers of Nestorius for reasons which will be explained in the following chapter. This, the first permanent breach in the unity of Christendom, was followed, twenty years later, by the refusal of Eutyches and those who thought with him, the Monophysites, to accept the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon on the subject of the dual nature of Christ. The Council of Chalcedon acknowledged in our Lord " two natures without mixture, without change, without separation, without division " ; the Monophysites, whose beliefs were the converse of Nestorianism, argued that His human nature was overshadowed to such an extent by His divinity that He had to all intents and purposes only one nature, the divine. The secession of the Monophysites led to the separation of the peoples known to us to-day as Jacobites, Copts, Abyssinians and Gregorian Armenians from the main body, which was now confined to the Christians who obeyed the five Patriarchs

—those of Rome (the Pope), Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem—and the Archbishop of Cyprus, the latter made autocephalous by the Council of Chalcedon.

The three earliest of the Patriarchates, in the order of seniority, were Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. Constantinople and Jerusalem were only made Patriarchates at the Council of Chalcedon; three-quarters of a century previously Constantinople had been nothing more than a local bishopric of Byzantium under the Metropolitan of Heraclea. But in 330 the Emperor Constantine, turning, in the words of Dante, "the eagle against the course of heaven," [1] converted little Byzantium into the great city that bears his name and made of it the capital of the Roman Empire. This change could not fail to modify profoundly the position of the bishop of the new Imperial residence. The bishop of the Old Rome had owed the acceptance of his primacy not a little to the fact that he was the bishop of the Emperor's city; the bishop of the new capital was not slow to benefit by this order of ideas. Within fifty years of the change a General Council had ruled that "the Bishop of Constantinople shall have the primacy of honour after the Bishop of Rome,

[1] "Posciaché Constantin l'aquila volse
Contra il corso del ciel."
Par. VI., i.

because that city is New Rome." So the Emperor's bishop had not only become independent of his own Metropolitan; he had gone over the heads of the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch.

It was, indeed, inevitable that this should happen. In the first place, the hierarchical organization of the early Christian Church followed consciously that of the Roman Empire, whose civil divisions into Prefectures, Dioceses and Provinces, ruled respectively by *praefecti*, *vicarii* and *praesides*, served as the model for the Patriarchates, Exarchates and Metropolitan sees of the ecclesiastical world. Secondly, the Roman Empire, after it became Christian, looked upon the Church as essentially an established body, closely linked with and inseparable from the conception of the State. Constantine, indeed, had allowed the bishops to govern the Church and preferred to remain "the bishop of things outside"; but his successors regarded themselves and were regarded by their subjects in ever increasing degree as head of the Church and State alike. Necessarily, therefore, the Emperor's bishop, the bishop of the Imperial Court, assumed an importance commensurate with that of his cathedral city, and secured, in the eyes of the eastern Christians at all events, a position not only more important than that of the Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria, but more important than that of the Pope, especially after

Rome, occupied by barbarian hordes, was politically lost to the Empire. His title of Oecumenical Patriarch, assumed at the end of the sixth century, although it did not imply jurisdiction over the other Patriarchs, indicated his newly won position of *primus inter pares* among his brothers of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

We have seen, then, that until the fifth century there was only one Church, and that the first breach in its comprehensiveness was made by the Nestorians in 431, the next by the Monophysites in 451. We have seen how the Bishop of Byzantium became, through the transfer of the Imperial capital from the Old to the New Rome, the Oecumenical Patriarch, the most powerful prelate in the eastern division of what was still the Universal Church. The next development is the growing estrangement between Rome and Constantinople, leading to ultimate separation and schism. When the breach was complete the Patriarchate of the West became the Church of Rome, while the four eastern Patriarchates formed with the Church of Cyprus the nucleus of what is now the Holy Orthodox Eastern Church.

The reasons for this estrangement were numerous and compelling. First and foremost was the difference in race and language between Westerns and Easterns. The rise of nationalities had begun ; the common citizenship of Romans and Constantino-

politans no longer served to disguise the fact that the former were now Italians, the latter Greeks. After a while the common citizenship ceased to exist even in theory. The Ostrogoths, then the Lombards set up kingdoms in Italy in defiance of the Emperor in Constantinople; the Popes entered into friendly relations with these barbarians; finally, in 800, a Pope actually crowned a barbarian king as Roman Emperor in direct violation of the rights of the true line in the New Rome. And the political separation completed the separation in language: the Byzantines forgot their Latin; the Italians did not learn Greek. Meanwhile the Popes were looking askance at the growing importance of the Patriarchs of Constantinople, while the latter grew to resent more and more what they regarded as the irksome pretensions of the former. If the Romans distrusted the Greeks as shifty intriguers, the Greeks were exasperated by the interferences of the Popes in their ecclesiastical affairs and by their constant insistence on the Roman primacy. When, therefore, in 867 Photius, whose disputed election to the Patriarchate of Constantinople had not been recognized by Rome, retaliated by excommunicating the Pope and his followers on doctrinal grounds, the minds of men were already prepared for separation by the political and racial divergencies that had been growing between East and West. Of the five doctrinal arguments advanced

by Photius in justification of his act of excommunication the most important was the addition by the Romans to the creed of the word *Filioque*, whereby they affirmed that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father *and the Son*. The Romans urged that this addition was merely a local Latin use, which they neither claimed nor sought to impose on the other Patriarchates ; the Greeks based their position on the anathema pronounced by the Council of Ephesus against anyone who modified or added to the creed without general consent. On the death of Photius the quarrel was composed *tant bien que mal*, and for another century and a half communion between East and West was restored. But the schism of Photius had given a powerful fillip to anti-Roman feeling in Constantinople, which the subsequent course of history did less than nothing to modify. " The troubles of the ninth and the eleventh centuries cut Christendom in half along a line that jealousies, misunderstandings, quarrels of all kinds had already long marked out " ;[1] and when, in 1053, the Oecumenical Patriarch Michael Cerularius assumed the mantle of Photius and renewed the attack on Roman practices and beliefs (denouncing especially, on this occasion, the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist), the breach was

[1] Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, 3rd edition, London, 1911.

complete. The other Eastern Patriarchs followed Constantinople, and henceforth, with only two brief periods of reunion, the Churches of East and West go their separate ways. The Fourth Crusade, which, instead of defending the Crusading states in the Holy Land against the Saracens, attacked, plundered and seized the Christian city of Constantinople, overthrew the Byzantine Empire and set up a Latin Empire in its place, was responsible for the culmination of Greek bitterness against the Franks. The two truces—they were nothing more—which were subsequently patched up were rendered possible only through the desperate need which each party had of the other. Although the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII. Palaeologus had retaken Constantinople from the Franks in 1261, he still feared that he might have to defend his capital against another Crusade, while the Pope was striving to preserve what remained of the Latin principalities in Syria and Palestine from total submersion. So the Second Council of Lyons restored the union in 1274. But the people of Constantinople, still smarting at the outrage of the Fourth Crusade, rose against it; and within a decade it was formally repudiated by Michael's successor, the Emperor Andronicus II.

The last of these unnatural reconciliations took place in 1439, when the Eastern Empire was at its last gasp. Again, only dire necessity on both sides

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made reunion possible. The Emperor's territory had now been reduced by the relentlessly advancing Turks to little more than the capital and its immediate environs; Pope Eugene IV., for his part, was in difficulties with an Anti-Pope and with the hostile Council of Basle, and looked to reunion to give him the necessary accretion of strength, wherewith to consolidate his position in Italy. So the penultimate Eastern Emperor, John VII., came to Italy with a magnificent retinue and with his brother, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who did not live to return to his land, but died in Florence and lies buried there in the Church of Santa Maria Novella. After more than a year of wrangling, not only over questions of doctrine but over futile minutiae of etiquette and precedence,[1] the union was restored for the last time, in 1439, by the famous Council of Ferrara-Florence in the decree beginning "*Laetentur coeli*—Let the Heavens rejoice," and remained in force until the Greeks, now Turkish *rayahs* with nothing more to hope for from the West, rejected it in 1472, nineteen years after the capture of Constantinople by Mohammed the Conqueror. But the Council of Florence, if its work failed to live, was

[1] John, with his Empire at death's door, could not forget that he was the successor of Constantine, and in his own eyes *de jure* the Lord of the Christian world. The Pope wanted the Patriarch Joseph to kiss his foot and insisted that Joseph's throne should be three steps lower than his own.

the occasion for some of the most sumptuous pageantry in the history of Christendom; and visitors to the Riccardi Palace in Florence can still admire, in Benozzo Gozzoli's wonderfully graphic frescoes, the ceremonial swan-song of the Byzantine Empire.

As it will have been inferred, the Orthodox Church does not differ fundamentally from that of Rome in doctrine; in all essentials the beliefs of the two Churches are the same. But it differs markedly in organization. The Roman Church is one body under one head, with one liturgical language. The Orthodox Church, being sprung not from one Patriarchate but from several, has no sole head but is a federation of independent bodies bound together by the fact that they are in communion with one another, with no central authority in matters of discipline and with only that of an Oecumenical Council in matters of faith. It has no single liturgical language; the services of the church are performed in whatever language happens to be that of the country. At the time of the schism, as we have seen, the component parts of the Orthodox Church were the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem and the Church of Cyprus. The Church of Russia, originally a part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, became autocephalous under the Patriarch of Moscow in 1589. Nearly all the remaining "autocephalous and isotimous"

branches of the Orthodox Church are the national Churches of countries which were formerly provinces of the Ottoman and Russian Empires. Thus, the Church of Georgia, at first subject to the Patriarchate of Antioch, had become autocephalous in the year 601, was forcibly absorbed by the Church of Russia in 1811, and recovered her independence in 1917; while the latest recruits are the newly formed Churches of the Baltic Republics. In the case of Turkey, her European provinces, until the rise of the Balkan nationalities in the nineteenth century, were ecclesiastically subject to the Patriarch of Constantinople; only when these provinces had won their independence of the Sultan did the Churches secure from a reluctant Phanar their independence of the Patriarch.

For the sake of clearness the Eastern Churches may be grouped in three categories, of which the first consists of the several autocephalous bodies composing the Holy Orthodox Eastern Church.

The second category is composed of the Churches, in communion neither with the Orthodox Church nor with the Church of Rome, which rejected either the Council of Ephesus or that of Chalcedon. These are the Nestorian, the Jacobite, the Armenian, the Coptic and the Abyssinian Churches.

The third category is formed by the Uniate Churches. From some of the Churches of the first

category and from each of those of the second there have seceded at different periods offshoots, which acknowledge the general supremacy of the Pope. They have retained in varying degree their original constitutions, discipline, languages and rites, but are in communion with the Church of Rome.

The Churches, with which this book is mainly concerned, are the Nestorian and the Jacobite in the second category, and their respective Uniate offshoots, the Chaldaean and the Syrian Catholic, in the third.

CHAPTER V

THE NESTORIANS: THE FIRST STAGE.

It will be remembered that we left the Patriarch of the Nestorians playing football with other Nestorian boys in a field on the outskirts of Mosul. In order to understand how in this lad of sixteen, a refugee from his native Hakkiari Mountains, we see the head of one of the most ancient of Christian Churches, we must needs indulge in a brief retrospect. If we credit a venerable tradition, Christianity was introduced into Mesopotamia by SS. Bartholomew and Thaddaeus; if we do not, it is at all events certain that it had penetrated at a very early date into the provinces of the old Assyrian Empire. Here, in this constant battleground between Rome and Persia, then between Byzantium and the Arabs, the Church took root among the Aramaic-speaking population, being treated, on the whole, tolerably well by the easy-going Parthian rulers of the land. In the year 225, however, these made way for the Persian Sassanids, with results unfortunate for the Christians.

The substitution of the Sassanid kings, a national

dynasty of true Persians, for the Parthian Arsacids on the throne of Cyrus and Darius, marked a fundamental change in the fortunes of the territories known to the Roman world as "the East." It marked no mere change of one ruler for another; it marked the definite revival, after an abeyance of five hundred years, of the great Achaemenian Persian Empire that had ranged itself against the forces of Hellenism and had ultimately capitulated to Alexander the Great. During the five centuries that they lay under alien or semi-alien rule, first under that of Alexander's Seleucid successors, who were Greeks, then under that of the Aryan Parthians, the Persians had lost neither their national sentiment nor their national aspirations. The force which kept these alive was the national religion, the ancient fire-worship as reformed by Zoroaster. As the Jews, after the destruction of their temple by Titus and the disappearance of the Jewish State, maintained their national consciousness by concentrating on their religion and by intensifying the customs, which separated them from their neighbours, so did the Persians in subjection rally round their Magian Church and hierarchy. And thus, when a national dynasty returned to power, the national Church came again into its own, and its priestly caste, the Magians, became one of the great powers of the State. The Empire was divided, ecclesiastically, into provinces

or dioceses, each under the rule of a *mobed*, a kind of bishop ; and the *mobeds* in their turn owed allegiance to the *mobed-i-mobedan*, a dignitary so powerful that the Shah-in-Shah himself was chary of offending him. That the priests of Ahura Mazda should have viewed with alarm and resentment the spread of Christianity in the dominions of the Great King was but natural ; and thus, with a weak or fanatical king and a strong high-priest, things went ill with the struggling little Church.

The second cause of persecution arose when Constantine made Christianity the State religion of the Roman Empire. The Persian king at this moment, and for the ensuing half-century, was Shapur II., whose perpetual wars with Rome brought disaster to the co-religionists of the national enemy among his own subjects. " Given a State professing a certain form of militant religion (it matters nothing whether its prophet be Zoroaster or Mohammed), how," asks Wigram,[1] " can loyalty to that State be reconciled with the profession of the religion of its rivals ? " The answer to that question in the case of the Christian subjects of the Persian Empire was forty years of persecution, during which more than sixteen thousand men and women, whose names were recorded, gave their lives for their faith, and the Church in Persia achieved a primacy in martyrs

[1] *The Assyrian Church, 100-640 A.D.*, p. 61.

which not even her sorely-tried Armenian sister can dispute.

When Shapur died, in 379, after a life and reign of seventy years,[1] the tormented Christians enjoyed an interval of comparative quiet and, under Yazdagird I. (399-420), a friend of Rome and a lover of peace, of real toleration. But the fairness displayed by this king to his subjects, irrespective of creed, at all events during the greater part of his reign, was not at all to the liking of the Magians, who noted with consternation the increasing number of Zoroastrian converts to Christianity. We find, therefore, under Yazdagird's son, Bahram V.,[2] and his immediate successors, a renewal, albeit on a smaller scale, of the persecutions of Shapur. By this time, however, the Church in Persia was becoming identified in an increasing degree with the tenets of Nestorianism; and, the greater the unpopularity of Nestorius and his teaching in the Byzantine West, the more favourably were his sympathizers regarded in the Persian East.

Let us now turn for a moment to the Christological controversies which agitated the Christian world during the fifth century, since one of these

[1] In the course of which he caused to be completed the editing of the *Zend-Avesta*, an indication of the devotion of the dynasty to the national religion.

[2] This is the Bahram Gur, Bahram "of the Wild Ass," of the *Rubaiyat* of 'Omar Khayyam.

was to have a decisive influence on the destinies of the Church in Persia. Up to the year 424, when it declared itself autocephalous and gave to its chief bishop at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the "Katholikos of the East," the additional title of Patriarch, the Persian Church had formed a part of the Patriarchate of Antioch, under the immediate jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Edessa (Urfa). At the third Oecumenical Council, held at Ephesus in 431, it was to the bishops subject to the Patriarch of Antioch, and especially to those of the Province of Edessa, that Nestorius of Constantinople looked for support in his struggle with his rival, Cyril of Alexandria.

Briefly, the doctrine which Nestorius sought to impose on the Church Universal was the divisibility and separation of the two persons, as well as of the two natures in Christ. During the years of controversy evoked by his proposition, the Christian world resounded to the echo of a number of difficult philosophical and metaphysical terms. Such expressions as *φύσις*, nature, *ὑπόστασις*, substance, *πρόσωπον*, person, *οὐσία*, essence, were bandied about not only by experts but by men who could not possibly have understood what they meant. They became the "slogans," as we should say to-day, not only of theologians but of the rabble, were hurled from one end of Christendom to the other with no more vehemence by passionate controversialists

than by the hired *bravi* of a Dioscor. As Nestorianism migrates, after the Council of Ephesus, across the Euphrates towards the territory of the Church we are considering, the confusion becomes yet greater. For the noise of argument in Greek is now swelled by that of dissension in Syriac: *kiana* and *qnuma*, *parsopa* and *ithutha* add their complicated sounds to the general din.

But we may well believe that the purely dogmatic side of the contest was of greater interest to Nestorius than it was to his eastern supporters. It is a significant fact that, although the Nestorian and Monophysite tenets were propounded by Greeks, it is only among non-Greeks that they have found permanent acceptance. And the reason is this. The subtle and restless Greek mind, ever seeking a *νέον τί*, was now finding an outlet for its energies in theology, as it had found it, in an earlier age, in philosophic speculation and finds it, in these degenerate days, in the advocacy or denunciation of this or that politician or political régime. But the great heresiarchs were no mere babblers or frivolous faction-leaders; they were men acting under the influence of profound convictions. Now, indeed, the spiritual life of the Greek-speaking branches of the Orthodox Church is at a sadly low ebb: the high-water mark of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in matters of dogma in the course of the last six centuries was attained

in connexion with the controversy over the "Uncreated Light of Mount Tabor," a doctrine, according to which a steadfast contemplation of the navel enabled the devotee to see a supernatural light emanating from that part of his person. But in the days of the Councils it was full of vigour. Men such as Nestorius and Eutyches were genuinely in earnest, were ready not only to speak but to suffer for what they taught. The same is true of their opponents, the protagonists of what prevailed as orthodoxy; but these lacked (indeed, all sides lacked) the power to understand the idea of compromise. It is, incidentally, the lack of this power, as a leading member of Kerensky's Cabinet once said to me, that distinguishes the modern Russian from the rest of mankind. Profoundly convinced that they, and only they, were right, the defenders of the faith of Ephesus and Chalcedon insisted on enforcing orthodoxy, as they understood it, upon people who might have nothing in common with them except that they called themselves Christians and were subjects of the same Emperor. It was surely too much to expect that Copts from the Nile Valley, Aramaic-speaking Syrians, Persians, Armenians and other Orientals should necessarily want to think alike, to the minutest subtlety, on the nature of Christ with Greeks, whether these hailed from Constantinople, Alexandria, or Antioch. How true is the comment on

these controversies of Mgr. Duchesne:[1] "Since the curiosity of man would investigate the mystery of Christ, since the indiscretion of theologians laid on the dissecting-table the Blessed Saviour, who came to be the object of our love and of our imitation rather than of our philosophical investigation, at least this investigation should have been made peaceably by men of approved competence and prudence, far from the quarrelsome crowd. The contrary happened. An unloosing of religious passion, a series of quarrels between metropolitans, of rivalries between ecclesiastical prelates, of noisy councils, imperial laws, deprivements, exiles, riots, schisms—these were the circumstances under which Greek theologians studied the dogma of the Incarnation. And if we look for the result of their work, we see at the end of the story the Eastern Church incurably divided, the Christian Empire broken up, the successors of Mohammed crushing under foot Syria and Egypt. This was the price of those metaphysical exercises."

But there was another reason for the unorthodoxy of the Oriental Churches beside the passion for uniformity on the part of these "prying Greeks." The eastern Christians were beginning to feel the stirrings of nationalism, of that sentiment of "one

[1] *Histoire ancienne de l'Église*, quoted by Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*.

race, one Church," which was crystallized, later on, in the *millet* system of the Turkish Government. Hand in hand with the opposition to the rule of the Roman Empire, which was felt by these foreign peoples, went opposition to orthodoxy as defined by the Roman Emperor. It was sufficient for the State to proclaim what men should believe for the beliefs in question to become unacceptable to the Empire's Syrian or Egyptian subjects. And it soon became apparent that only by the adoption of a so-called heresy could an eastern people emancipate itself from Byzantine ecclesiastical domination. We have seen that the non-Hellenic races of the Balkan Peninsula had to await the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, which, so far as the Orthodox Church was concerned, was merely the continuation of its Byzantine predecessor, to achieve the same object. It was not until Serbs, Bulgars and Rumanians had become politically independent of the Porte that they gained their spiritual independence of the Phanar. So, with our Syriac-speaking Nestorians or Assyrians (they call themselves " Surai "), it was nationalism more than Nestorianism which caused their secession ; their main, if half-realized motive was to become a national Church. Thus the " Surai," although their bishops were not actually present at Ephesus, refused to denounce Nestorius ; and they accepted his followers when

these were banished from the territory of the Empire by the Emperor Zeno in 489. Not until 612, indeed, did they formally adopt their present doctrinal position and thus part company with the "Western Fathers." But we have seen that this parting of the ways was in the main political, was the result of differences racial rather than religious. That the "heresy" of the Separated Churches of the East is more apparent than real was admitted by the Lambeth Conference in 1920, when it resolved that "investigations have gone far towards shewing that any errors as to the Incarnation of our Lord, which may at some period of their history have been attributed to them, have at any rate now passed away."

This historical disquisition, dry as it may appear, is necessary to render intelligible the subsequent development of the Nestorian Church, which we may now call by that name. It was not until the fall of the Zoroastrian Sassanids before the new power of Islam that the Nestorians were able to embark with full vigour upon that amazing career of missionary enterprise, which must make the Patriarchate of the East for ever glorious. In 637 the Moslems captured Seleucia-Ctesiphon, alike the Sassanid capital and the seat of the "Katholikos and Patriarch of the East"; and in 641 the entire Sassanid Empire was overthrown by the conquering Arabs, then on

the first wave of the surge of conquest set in motion by the revelation of the Prophet of Mecca.

It must not be assumed that the Magian type of religious philosophy was a low one, that Zoroastrians were divided from Christians by a deep ethical gulf. Their beliefs are held to the present day by the highly respectable community of the Parsees ; and it has been urged by a Christian divine [1] that their " views of God, of the world, and of man, approach more nearly to the fulness of truth than anything else that heathen literature can show." The Zoroastrians persecuted their Christian fellow-subjects from motives of self-protection, seeing in them a force which might easily become as powerful as that of their own faith. The Arabs, on the other hand, felt no such apprehensions, and extended to the Nestorians, now their *rayahs*,[2] the toleration, which an all-powerful majority can safely grant to a harmless little minority. Sir Charles Eliot, in his *Turkey in Europe*, describes very happily the feelings entertained by the Turks for their Armenian subjects before 1896. The Turks, he says, regarded the Armenians as the best kind of Giaour—harmless, serviceable, comfortable infidels, whom one could not expect to meet in heaven, but who were very

[1] Bishop Westcott.

[2] *Ra'aya*, literally " flocks," " herds "; recognized tributary non-Moslem subjects of Moslem States.

useful here below. Very similar was the attitude of the Arabs towards the Nestorians. For the latter were not only harmless; they were decidedly helpful to their new overlords. "They had," says Fortescue,[1] "a higher tradition of civilization than their masters. Nestorians were used at court as physicians, scribes, secretaries, as Copts were in Egypt under the Fatimids. This body of Nestorian officials at court got much influence, and eventually had a great voice in canonical matters, elected Patriarchs, and so on. They formed a kind of guild or corporate society, the 'learned men' who had the Khalif's ear. Indeed, the line of Arab scholarship which came to Spain, and was a great factor in mediaeval learning, begins in great part with the Nestorians at Baghdad. The Nestorians had inherited Greek culture in Syriac translations. Now they handed it on to their Arab masters." "And when we remember," comments Wigram,[2] "how much of the culture of mediaeval Europe was to come to her through the Saracens, and that the 'Nestorians' were the teachers of the Saracens, one is set asking whether Oxford, Cambridge, and Paris do not owe an unsuspected debt to Bar-soma,[3]

[1] *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, p. 93.

[2] *The Assyrian Church*, p. 167.

[3] A fifth century Bishop of Nisibis (the modern Nisibin) and one of the outstanding characters in the early history of the

though the road from Nisibis to those centres may run through Baghdad and Salamanca." Mohammed, too, had personal intercourse with Nestorians and had probably learned from them what he knew of Christianity. The story of his relations with the Nestorian monk Sergius rests in all likelihood on something more than mere legend ; and he is said to have been visited by Ishu-yahb II., who was Patriarch of the Nestorians at the time of the Arab conquest, and to have granted to him the charter of privileges known as the *Testamentum Mahometi*.[1] By this document, now generally regarded in the West as of dubious authenticity but accepted by early Moslem writers as genuine, the Nestorians were freed from military service, their customs and laws were to be respected, their clergy were to be exempted from the payment of tribute, the taxes imposed on the rich were limited to twelve pieces of money, those to be paid by the poor to four ; and it was provided that when a Christian woman entered the service of a Moslem she should not be compelled to change her religion or to abstain from the fasts and ceremonies enjoined by her Church. In a later chapter we shall hear of two other *firmans* of

Nestorian Church. He transferred to Nisibis the famous theological college of Edessa, suppressed by the Emperor Zeno on account of its Nestorian complexion.

[1] Published in Paris by Gabriel Sionita in 1630.

protection, reputed to have been granted to the Nestorians by the Prophet himself; and in these favourable conditions the Church of the East set out on a course of expansion destined before long to give to its Patriarch a territorial jurisdiction wider than any Pope has known.

CHAPTER VI

PRESTER JOHN

HAVING freed itself, ecclesiastically, from Byzantium, having reached an understanding, politically, with its Arab rulers, the Church of the East, as it had come to be called, began to look eastward and to embark upon a missionary career as startling as that of Islam, although its methods were wholly different. It regarded all Asia as its mission field, and soon the Christian faith, as propagated by Nestorians, had spread into Arabia and the Persian Gulf, to the southernmost parts of India and to Ceylon, through Persia into Tatary and Afghanistan, to Siberia and the eastern coasts of China. On the destruction of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the twin city on the two banks of the Tigris, the Patriarchs had moved their seat to Baghdad, the political capital of the 'Abbasid Khalifs ; and from Baghdad their rule extended not only to the Mediterranean and the Gulfs of Aden and Oman but, amazing to relate, to the Indian and Pacific Oceans and almost to the shores of the Arctic.

Already in the days of its nominal dependence on Antioch the Church in Persia had displayed the beginnings of its missionary tendencies. In the early fifth century we find, attending its synods, Bishops of Teheran, Ispahan, Khorasan, Merv and Herat, and notice the signatures of " Adraq, Bishop of the tents of the Kurds," a peripatetic prelate, who was bringing Christianity, even then, to those nomad and semi-nomad mountaineers. It did not hesitate to throw out feelers into the Orthodox West and into Monophysite Africa. In the eighth century there was a Nestorian Bishop in Egypt; Nestorianism maintained itself for many centuries in Cyprus beside the native Orthodox Church of the island, and the Nestorian Metropolitan of Cyprus attended the Council of Florence in 1439. The Nestorian Church of S. George the Exiler is the only one of Famagusta's mediaeval churches that is still in Christian (although not in Nestorian) use ; the richest merchants of Famagusta, at the time when the Cypriote city was the leading port in the eastern Mediterranean, were two Nestorians, the brothers Lachas.[1] But these efforts of the Nestorians in the South and West were merely *parerga* to their great task of evangelizing the East.

[1] For the brothers Lachas and the Church of S. George the Exiler, *cf.* Luke, *Anatolica*, Macmillan, London, 1924, pp. 101-2 and 117-18.

Our earliest knowledge of the most lasting of the Nestorian missions in Asia, that of the western coast of India, comes to us from the Egyptian monk Cosmas, known as Indico-pleustes, " the navigator of India." This enterprising traveller of the first half of the sixth century, himself probably a Nestorian, found " Persian Christians " in the islands of Socotra and Ceylon and a bishop at Kalyana, near Bombay. The history of these Malabar Christians, these " Christians of S. Thomas," is an interesting one,[1] but it is too long and tangled to be related here. Suffice it to say that nearly a million Christians in the States of Cochin and Travancore bear witness to-day to the astounding enterprise of the Church of the East in this distant region during what were the Dark Ages in Europe, and have never ceased to celebrate their services in the Syriac tongue of their teachers. In the sixteenth century the Malabar Christians were forced by their Portuguese conquerors into union with Rome : the story of the synod of Diamper, with its Inquisition and its burnings, is not a pretty one. And although the majority

[1] Curious were the relations of King Alfred with the Malabar Christians. During the siege of London by the Danes Alfred vowed that, if the Danes were driven back, he would send presents to Rome, also to India in honour of SS. Thomas and Bartholomew. He kept his vow, and in 883, as related in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Bishop Sighelm of Shireburn took the king's offering to Malabar.

of those who renounced this union when the Portuguese made way for the Dutch on the Pepper Coast accepted the Jacobite rite and are now in communion with the Jacobite (Monophysite) Patriarch of Antioch, a few thousands have resumed their allegiance to Mar Shimun. The Nestorian Church, which once counted its bishops by hundreds, is now reduced to four; but one of these bears the title, pathetic memory of a great past, of "Metropolitan of India."

Less enduring, but of greater extent and renown, were the Nestorian missions in Central Asia and the Far East. At so early a period as the seventh century we find the Patriarch Ishu-yahb II., whose traditional visit to the Prophet Mohammed has been referred to in the previous chapter, instructing the Metropolitan of Yaqut to be more diligent in his oversight of the Churches of Merv and Khorasan. From Persia into Afghanistan, from Trans-caspia into Turkestan and Siberia these indomitable men carried their faith, not resting until they had established it in the uttermost ends of China. They carried their learning too. Not content with transmitting to mediaeval Europe, through their Arab conquerors, the scholarship of Greece and Edessa, the Nestorians endowed the races of remotest Asia with something of their own culture. The Uighur alphabet is derived directly from the Syriac, and on

the Uighur writing are based the scripts of the Mongols and the Manchus. When I visited the Chelebi of Konia in 1913, I asked this hereditary Grand-master of the Order of Dancing Dervishes for his version of the derivation of the word "Chelebi," the essential part of his title. His Eminence declared it to be a Turkish or Tatar corruption of the Arabic *salib* (cross, crucifix), applied in the Middle Ages by the Turkish tribes of Central Asia to the only Christians with whom they were wont to come in contact, namely, to the Nestorian missionaries and clergy. And as these, continued the Chelebi, were usually men of learning, the name was gradually given by Tatars and Turks to cultured people in general, and in this curious roundabout fashion came to be applied to the great Moslem dignitary, who embodies the traditions of the poet and mystic Jelal al-Dîn Rumi and down to the present century invested the Sultans of Turkey with the sword of 'Osman.[1] Be it remembered, in estimating the value of the Chelebi's opinion, that the Heads of the Mevlevi Order have "sat on the sheepskin of the Convent of the Holy Mevlana" for seven hundred years, and have main-

[1] The last Sultan of Turkey to be girt by a Chelebi of Konia was Mehmed V. Reshad, in 1909. The ceremony in the case of Mehmed VI. Vahid al-Dîn, who succeeded in 1918, was performed, owing to the exigencies of the war and entirely contrary to precedent, by the ex-Grand Senusi, Sidi Ahmed.

tained an unbroken succession from their founder Jelal al-Dîn, who left his native Balkh in what is now Afghanistan to take up his abode in Konia at the very time when the Nestorian Church was at the height of its influence in Central Asia.

In 1625 a remarkable discovery was made by Jesuit missionaries at a place called Si-ngan-fu, in the Chinese province of Shen-si. These men, who seemed for a moment about to bring the millions of the Celestial Empire once more within the Christian fold, lighted upon a tablet erected by their Nestorian predecessors in 781 to commemorate the excellencies of the Christian religion and its widespread propagation in the Middle Kingdom. Set up in the reign of Charlemagne and discovered when Charles I. was King of England, the monument of Si-ngan-fu came to its finders and to the world at large as a veritable voice from the dead. Little had the Jesuits, who unearthed it, suspected that, a thousand years before their day, an Asiatic Christian Church had established its bishops through the length and breadth of China. The inscription is mainly in Chinese, partly in Syriac. The Syriac portion contains the date according to the year of the "Yunans," [1] and gives the names of the founders of the monument and of bishops and priests of the Nestorian Church

[1] The era of the Ionians, *i.e.* Greeks, namely, the Seleucid era of Antioch, as to which *cf.* p. 112.

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in China; incidentally, it offers the only known instance of Estrangelo Syriac characters being written in vertical lines.[1] The Chinese portion is headed by the figure of a cross and begins with the title of the monument: "Inscription on stone declaring the introduction and promulgation of the illustrious religion of Ta-tsin [2] in the Middle Kingdom." Then comes a "laudatory chant" by King-tsing, "priest of the Church of Ta-tsin." The twenty-five sections or chapters that follow contain a profession of the Christian faith, an exposition of the ceremonies and observances of the Nestorian Church, and a general history of the progress of Christianity in China and praise of the Emperors who made that progress possible. The eleventh chapter describes the introduction of Christianity into China in these terms:

"In the time of the accomplished Emperor Tai-tsung,[3] whose reign was so brilliant, so flourishing, who extended far and wide the Empire of the dynasty of Tang—in the time of this enlightened monarch, solicitous for the happiness of men, there was one of eminent virtue, of the Kingdom of Ta-tsin, named A-lo-pen[4], who, consulting the azure clouds

[1] Pauthier, *L'Inscription Syro-Chinoise de Si-ngan-fou*, Paris, 1858, p. xii.

[2] Syria; also the East Roman Empire. [3] 627-650.

[4] Perhaps the Chinese form of the Syriac Allaha-pna, "God converts."

of heaven and bearing with him the true sacred Scriptures, observed with attention the order of the winds, that he might escape the perils, to which he was exposed. He arrived in the ninth year Ching-kuan [1] in the city of Chang-ngan. The Emperor ordered his chief minister, the Duke Fang-hiuen-ling, to take with him a military escort, and to meet his visitor at the western suburb in order to escort him within the city. The sacred books, which he had brought, were translated in a hall of the Imperial Palace, and many questions were asked regarding the doctrine in the Emperor's private apartments. The doctrine, having been studied profoundly, was judged upright and true; and it was ordered that it should be disseminated and taught in public."

In this manner did a Mesopotamian monk convey to the people of Cathay the knowledge of the " illustrious and honourable Messiah " twelve hundred and ninety years ago.

Next to the legend of the Holy Grail it is safe to say that no belief excited the interest and the imagination of mediaeval Europe in greater degree than that connected with the person and dynasty of Prester John. In that vast and mysterious *terra incognita* of Farther Asia, unknown to the West until its unification under the Great Khan enabled sundry intrepid travellers to penetrate to the Courts

[1] 635.

of the princes of the House of Jenghiz, there reigned, men knew, a mighty Christian potentate, who would one day, it was hoped, join forces with the kings of the West to expel the Saracens from the Holy Land. Some of the collections of tales so popular in the Middle Ages include on the subject stories of the fantastic kind which we associate with the name of Sir John Maundeville, but the evidence of serious and cautious witnesses such as Rubruquis, Friar John di Piano Carpini and, above all, Marco Polo, stands in a different category. For our present purpose we need trouble ourselves with the fabulous accretions, which mediaeval credulity soon added to the basis of truth, as little as with the last phase of Prester John, wherein he is identified with the Christian ruler of Abyssinia. Of more concern to us here is the story told at the Papal Court in 1145 by the Bishop of Gabala.[1] This Syrian prelate recounted how, " in the extreme orient, between Persia and Armenia," there dwelt " one John, king and priest, who was, with his people, a Christian, but a Nestorian." Somewhat later we find the Sieur de Joinville in the West, in the East the great Jacobite divine and historian Barhebraeus, repeating a story which is very similar. And Marco Polo has much

[1] Jebeleh on the coast of Syria, between Latakia and Tartus. It is not to be confused with Jebeil (Byblos), which is referred to in Chapter I.

to say about the " great prince, the same that we call Prester John, him, in fact, about whose great dominion all the world talks."

And what is the foundation of this widespread belief in Prester John, what sediment of truth remains when the froth of legend is poured away ? Why is this Christian monarch of the remote East Presbyter, and why John ? In the first place it is necessary to bear in mind that the Mongols, in the earlier stages of their career as world-conquerors, appalling as was the slaughter by which they achieved their conquests, were tolerant in matters of religion. Thus, the two ministers, to whom Kuyuk, the third Khakan and the grandson of Jenghiz, left the affairs of State, were Nestorians, as were his doctors ; and a Nestorian chapel stood before his tent. Christianity and Islam, Buddhism and Shamanism were tolerated on an equal footing. It was not until the Empire of Jenghiz began to fall to pieces from sheer unwieldiness that the rulers of its component parts gravitated definitely towards Islam in the West, Buddhism in the East. Although the imagination staggers at the thought of the blood they spilled, they did not kill *ad majorem dei gloriam* ; in questions of faith they practised the tolerance of indifference. If they shewed favour to one religion more than to another in this earlier period, they did so towards Christianity. On several occasions the Mongols displayed willing-

ness to enter into relations with the Christian West, seeing in the Frankish rulers possible allies against their principal western enemies, the Arab Khalifate, the Egyptian Mamelukes and the Empire of the Seljuq Turks. Hulagu Khan, another grandson of Jenghiz and the founder in Persia of the Mongol dynasty of the Il-khans, was not a Christian, although his son Abagha married a daughter of Michael Palaeologus [1] and some of his relatives were baptized. But Europe believed him to be one ; and the Pope addressed to him a letter of congratulation on his good intentions. In pursuance of the same policy, other Mongol princes espoused western Christian wives. Toktu, Khan of the Golden Horde, married Maria, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II. ; and the wife of Uzbeg Khan, a subsequent ruler of the Golden Horde, was a daughter of Andronicus III.

Secondly, we must remember that the western travellers, who made their way to the lands of the Mongol Empire, entered Asia preoccupied with thoughts of Prester John. Not unnaturally, they found more than one candidate, whom some part or other of the story would fit. Certain aspects of the character applied to this, others to that Mongol chief known to be within the sphere of Nestorian influence.

[1] The lady was destined for Hulagu himself, but he died before she arrived at his court.

So we find the attribution hovering for a while over the head of the Gur Khan, the founder of the State of Qara-Kitai.[1] A little later Rubruquis sees Prester John in Küchlük, Khan of the Naiman tribe, who usurped the sovereignty of Qara-Kitai and married a daughter of the last Gur Khan. But the ruler who fulfils the greatest number of requirements is the Khan of the Nestorian tribe of the Kerait, a prince who received from the Kin Emperor of northern China the title of "Wang" (kinglet), and is known thereafter as the Wang Khan, corrupted by his European contemporaries to Ung Khan. For a time the Ung Khan competed with the terrible Jenghiz for the hegemony of Central Asia. He and his house were Christians; and Marco Polo at the close of the thirteenth century, Friar John of Montecorvino and Friar Odoric early in the fourteenth, found his successors, "still Prester John," reigning in the land of "Tenduk."[2] To analyze the origins

[1] Qara-Kitai is the equivalent of "Black Cathay." Kitai is still the Russian name for China.

[2] The later history and end of the Kerait is not without interest. In the early part of the eighteenth century, now no longer Christians but Moslem, they invaded Russia under the leadership of their chief, Ayuka Khan, but were compelled to make peace with Peter the Great at Astrakhan in 1722. Unable, however, to settle down under Russian rule they decided, with a revival of the old nomad spirit, upon the drastic expedient of wholesale emigration. 70,000 families broke up their homes and wandered to China, where they were rapidly assimilated by the native population. *Cf.* the *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. iv., p. 650.

of the story of Prester John is beyond the purpose of this chapter. Despite the cloud of doubt and confusion, in which it is enveloped, we may be satisfied that the person existed, although his sacerdotal character did not. "John" may have been the name given in baptism to the Ung Khan; it may have been suggested by the resemblance between "Ung Khan" and "Yukhanan." The priestly element is more difficult to explain. But it is generally accepted that Lamaism owes its monasticism and its ritual to imitation of the practices of the early Nestorians on the part of their Buddhist neighbours; and it has been suggested that a Mongol Christian chief may, with the well known tolerance of the race, have held, together with his Christianity, a place in the hierarchy of Buddhist monks.

I cannot close this chapter of Nestorian history without a reference to the most interesting of the efforts of the Mongol rulers to establish an understanding with the West, because the effort in question, made through the agency of a Nestorian ambassador, sheds light on the Nestorian Church alike at the moment of its widest expansion and at the height of its spiritual and political activities. The ruler who sent the embassy was Argon, the Il-khan of Persia, a grandson of Hulagu; and, at the time of its despatch, Argon's great-uncle, the Khakan Kublai, the patron of the Polos, was still exercising from his

throne in Peking the supreme overlordship of the vast Mongol confederation founded by Kublai's grandfather Jenghiz.

The story is told in one of the most curious manuscripts [1] that have come down to us from the Middle Ages—one of the most curious because, true counterpart of the narratives of Marco Polo and his European contemporaries, it relates the experiences of a Mongol Christian, a native of Peking, in the course of his travels overland to the remote West. The story opens with the account of the birth, parentage and youth of two native members of the Nestorian Church in China, both Uighurs by race. The one, Mark, was born at a place called Kow-shang or Kung-chang, which is identified with Marco Polo's Cacianfu ; the other, Bar-soma, in Peking, which in the days of the Mongol Empire was called Khanbaligh, " the city of the Khan," the Cambaluc of Marco Polo.

In due course the two friends resolve to enter the priesthood and to embrace the monastic life ; and for some years they live together as hermits and ascetics and acquire a wide reputation for sanctity in the Chinese Church. Then Mark becomes restless.

[1] Translated and edited by J. B. Chabot, *Histoire de Mar Jabalaha III., Patriarche des Nestoriens, et du Moine Rabban Çauma, Ambassadeur du Roi Argoun en Occident*, Paris, 1895. The language of the manuscript is Syriac, and there is a copy (" Oriental Manuscripts 3636 ") in the British Museum.

A Page of "Oriental Manuscripts 3636."

He has visions of a great destiny reserved for him in what he regards as the West, and ultimately he induces his companion to undertake with him a pilgrimage to the Holy Places. We can hardly realize nowadays how tremendous an enterprise was this journey across the breadth of Asia, upon which our two poor Mongol monks from Eastern China decide to embark. Their relatives and friends oppose the project with energy, and to their persuasions are added those of the two governors of the province, sons-in-law of Kublai Khan. "Why," ask these, "do you abandon our country to go into the West? Are we not at pains to bring hither monks and bishops from the West? How, then, can we allow you to depart?" But they are firm in their resolve, and are sent on their way by the princes with gifts. After many hardships they arrive, by way of Kashgar and Khorasan, in the province of Azerbaijan, where they meet the Nestorian Patriarch, Mar Denha or Dinkha. They then continue on their way to Baghdad to venerate the shrines of Mar Mari [1] and the Prophet Ezekiel, and those of other saints at Erbil and Mosul, Sinjar, Nisibin and Mardin. After accomplishing this preliminary pilgrimage they settle down for a while in

[1] *Mar* (fem. *Mart*) is a Syriac title meaning "Lord," "Monsignor." It is given to saints and bishops. S. Mari, the disciple of Addai, is the reputed Apostle of Persia.

a monastery near Baghdad, where they enjoy an interval of peace that is broken by the Patriarch, who recalls them from the joys of contemplation to a life of activities about his person. They undertake on his behalf a mission to the Il-khan Abagha, now the ruler of the lands of the 'Abbasid Khalifate, which his father Hulagu had overthrown ; and then they endeavour to resume their journey to Jerusalem, the goal of their undertaking. But Syria is being overrun by the Mameluke Bibars, the enemy of the Mongol Khans, and our travellers make a laborious *détour* through the Armenian city of Ani and the kingdom of Georgia. Even this gallant attempt is of no avail, so they return to the Patriarch, who has now formed another plan for their future. He consecrates Mark Metropolitan of China and appoints Bar-soma to be Mark's Visitor-General, despite the protests of the pair against returning to the Far East with their purpose unfulfilled. The Patriarch remarks to the new Metropolitan that no bishop has hitherto borne the title of Mar Mark, and that a new name will have to be found for him by the drawing of lots. This is done, and Mark becomes Yahb-Allaha, which means " God-given " and is the Syriac equivalent of the western Theodore. Almost immediately afterwards Mar Denha dies, and the bishops elect Mark to succeed him as Patriarch and Katholikos of the East, with the title of Yahb-Allaha

III., wisely deciding that his Mongol nationality and his popularity with the Mongol Imperial House outweigh the disadvantages of his lack of theological learning and his unfamiliarity with the Syriac tongue. So Mark is now Patriarch, with his friend Bar-soma at his side, and is well treated by Abagha and, after his death and that of his unfriendly Moslem successor Ahmed, by the next Il-khan, Argon.

We now come to the most remarkable part of the narrative. Argon is anxious to contract an alliance with the Pope and the princes of Europe against the Egyptian Mamelukes, and asks the Patriarch to find him a suitable envoy. Yahb-Allaha nominates Bar-soma, and the latter sets out, in the year 1287, accompanied by various dignitaries of the Patriarch's Court. Yahb-Allaha's choice affords great satisfaction to Argon, who considers that the despatch of a real Mongol Christian of high rank, the legate of the Patriarch of Eastern Christendom, provides a favourable opportunity to convert to his views the Pope and the Frankish rulers.

So Bar-soma again passes through Armenia and Georgia, and by way of the Black Sea reaches Constantinople, where he pays his respects to the Emperor Andronicus II., who was connected with the Mongols, as we have seen, by the marriage of his daughter to Toktu Khan, the ruler of the Golden Horde. Thence he takes ship to Italy, sees

Stromboli in eruption, and from the terrace of a house in Naples witnesses a naval battle between *Irid Charladou* (a puzzling name, which conceals the identity of the King of Naples, "il re Carlo due") and *Irid Arkoun* ("il re d'Aragon"). After this introduction to European politics and the unity of western Christendom, our Nestorian and his suite "proceed to Rome, where they learn that the Pope (Honorius IV.) is dead. They are, however, introduced into the presence of the Cardinals, who are assembled to elect the new Pope, and to these they explain the object of their mission. This meeting between the representatives of western Christendom and the legate of the Patriarch of the East is one of the most curious episodes of the book—perhaps one of the oddest moments of Church history. We get the tableau of a Chinese Nestorian Christian face to face with the College of Cardinals, instructing them as to the existence of an unknown Pope in the East," [1] and reciting to them his confession of faith. Then, since there is for the moment no Pope, with whom he can negotiate, Bar-soma proceeds to the other States, to which he is accredited, beginning with Genoa, where he sees the Holy Grail.[2] His next

[1] Danby, *A Chinese Nestorian Pope of the East*, in *Bible Lands*, vol. vi., no. 98.

[2] The vase of green crystal supposed to have been used at the Last Supper. When Caesarea in Palestine, where it was preserved, was taken by the Crusaders in 1101, it was included in

visit is to the King of France. Philip IV. orders his "emirs" to shew the envoy the sights of Paris, including the University and the Abbey of S. Denis, and, as an exceptional compliment, displays to him, preserved in a casket of crystal, the Crown of Thorns.[1]

Now follows the part of Bar-soma's embassy which must have the greatest interest for Englishmen, namely his visit to "King *Alangitar* in *Kasonia*." The author of the manuscript, or a copyist, has here again mistaken, as is his habit, the title for the personal name; for this mysterious personage is none other than the King of "Angleterre," Edward I., then in residence in Gascony. King Edward welcomes his strange visitor with all honour and gives a favourable answer to the subject of his mission. He tells the monk that the Kings of the Franks wear the Cross on their breasts in earnest of their determination to recover the Holy Land; and he receives the Holy Communion at the hands of this Nestorian of Peking. When Bar-soma, in accordance with his custom (for he is the pious pilgrim as much as the

the share of the booty which fell to the Genoese. It is still treasured in Genoa Cathedral under the name of the *Sacro Cattino*.

[1] This and other relics of the Passion were acquired by S. Louis from certain Venetian merchants, with whom they had been pawned by Baldwin II., Latin Emperor of Constantinople. It was for their accommodation that the Sainte Chapelle was built.

ambassador), makes inquiry about the principal relics and other wonders of the land, Edward replies: "There is nothing more admirable than what we have seen, namely that in the land of the Franks there are no two confessions, but only one faith in our Lord, which all Christians profess." One wonders to what extent the naval engagement, of which he was a witness at Naples, tended to discount, in the envoy's mind, the practical value of this uniformity.[1]

Our monk now returns to Rome, to find a Pope in the person of Nicholas IV. Remaining in Rome sufficiently long to be present at the ceremonies of Holy Week and Easter, 1288, and to receive, despite his Nestorianism, the sacrament from Nicholas, Bar-soma journeys home with letters and presents for the Khan and the Patriarch and with relics for the latter, and is welcomed by them with great rejoicings. The manuscript next proceeds to deal at some length with the relations of Mar Yahb-Allaha and his flock with their Mongol rulers and their Moslem neighbours. It closes with the death of the Patriarch in 1317 after a career which is, in its way, unparalleled in history, a career which brought an obscure Mongol monk from his Chinese birth-

[1] In 1303 Edward despatches, by a subsequent envoy, a letter (which has been preserved) to Mar Yahb-Allaha, apologizing for his delay in taking part in the Crusade.

place to the rule of the Christian East. Twenty-five Metropolitans and some two hundred and thirty bishops acknowledged his authority; his jurisdiction extended from Ceylon to Siberia, from Socotra to Samarkand, from Cyprus to where

> "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure-dome decree."

Felix opportunitate mortis, he died when his Church was at the height of its glory. Within a century of his death the Nestorians, their flourishing missions utterly wiped out, had disappeared from China and from the vast territories of Central Asia, and had become a shattered remnant in the mountains of Kurdistan.

CHAPTER VII

THE PEOPLE OF MAR SHIMUN

I MAY seem to have dealt at inordinate length with the annals of the Nestorians in the past, but only in this way could I attempt to convey a true impression of their place in history, of their almost fabulous vicissitudes. I have been as succinct as seemed possible ; but without tracing, however cursorily, the successive steps in the amazing career of the " Surai," I could not hope to explain how the predecessors of the poor little boy, who sought shelter in the camp of refuge established by the army of George V., were in a position to correspond on equal terms with Edward I. and to receive at their shrines the offerings of King Alfred.

The cataclysm which arrested the brilliant progress of Christianity in the Far and Middle East, which not only annihilated the missions of the Nestorians but left a ghastly void on the surface of Asia, was the invasion of that scourge of God, " Tamerlane," the lame Timur. Hulagu, terribly destructive as he was, yet set up in Persia an

organized and, on the whole, a civilized state. But Timur, a rebel against the House of Jenghiz, although his descendants established the Mogul (Mongol) Empire in India, was nothing but a devastator, a devastator on an appalling scale. It was a long time before the grass grew again where he and his hordes had passed; "who can reckon the tribute they have taken, the cities they have sacked, the blood they have spilled?"

After the 'Abbasid Khalifate and its capital Baghdad fell at the hands of Hulagu, the Nestorian Patriarchs moved northward and divided their time between Mosul and Hulagu's capital in Persian Azerbaijan, Maragha or Margha, a town situated to the east of Lake Urumiah, about seventy miles south of Tabriz. Maragha was the favourite residence of Mar Yahb-Allaha III. and his immediate successors; but, after the wholesale slaughter perpetrated by Timur, the surviving Nestorians fled for safety to the highlands of Kurdistan. When the storm had subsided and the modern states of Persia and Turkey had begun to rise from the chaos of the Mongols' passage, the Nestorian remnant was able to take stock of its position and to contemplate its desolation. Rarely can so short a period of years have witnessed so drastic a change in the fortunes of a people; what had been a mighty blaze was now a dimly flickering spark. Gone were the bishoprics and the faithful of

China, of Siberia, of Turkestan, of eastern Persia; cut off from all contact with the parent Church were the communities of Malabar. In Syria and 'Iraq proper the situation was but little better : the Church of the East, which had well merited its name, was now confined to the plains and mountains of northern Mesopotamia. The mere shadow of its former self, almost exterminated and without resources, it was even compelled to abandon its holdings in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre ; of its chapels and priests in the central shrine of Christendom we hear no more after the sixteenth century.[1] The same century saw the beginnings of a new series of losses. The Nestorians of the city and plain of Mosul, for reasons referred to in a previous chapter,[2] began to enter into communion with Pope Julius III. and were formed by Rome into a separate Uniate Church, to which was given the name Chaldaean. The ancient stock was now confined to the remote fastnesses of the Hakkiari Mountains ; and at Qudshanes, in one of their wildest valleys, the Patriarch Mar Shimun XIII. (1662-1700) established the Patriarchal residence. In 1843 and 1845 savage massacres of Nestorians were carried out by the Kurdish Mir of

[1] *Cf.* the present writer's chapter on " The Christian Communities in the Holy Sepulchre " in *Jerusalem, 1920-1922*, John Murray, London, 1924, pp. 50 *sqq*.

[2] P. 27.

Bohtan, Bedr Khan Beg, and his followers ; and so reduced was the little flock thereafter that, but for the timely aid given since 1886 by the " Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission," this most interesting survival might well have disappeared altogether.

The last massacre of Bedr Khan Beg is noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, it left so indelible an impression on the minds of the survivors that the Assyrians, in ordinary parlance, still date their years from 1845. Secondly, the Kurds, in ravaging Qudshanes and in pillaging its church, destroyed one of the greatest treasures of the House of Mar Shimun, the *firman* cherished by a long line of Patriarchs as having been granted to the Church of the East by the Prophet Mohammed, together with a knife of his giving. " Once in the year," says Surma Khanum d'Beit Mar Shimun, the aunt of the present Patriarch, in her interesting little book on the customs of her people,[1] " a selected Mollah of Julamerk used to come up and read the document in the public assembly. Further, the strictest Moslems, who will not as a rule eat anything that has been slaughtered by a Christian, will eat without hesitation of any animal slaughtered by a member of the Patriarchal family."

[1] *Assyrian Church Customs and the Murder of Mar Shimun*, The Faith Press, London, 1920.

It was at the time of the defections to the Chaldaeans that those who remained true to the old Church made their Patriarchate hereditary in the House of Mar Shimun, the Syriac for " Lord Simon." Since then every Patriarch has assumed, on his succession, the name Shimun ; and the dignity which, owing to the looseness of Turkish control in this inaccessible region, was not only spiritual, but temporal, has passed from uncle to nephew or brother to brother (the Patriarchs and Bishops are celibate and life-long abstainers from meat) like the Prince-Bishopric of Montenegro under the Vladikas. Bishoprics, too, have tended to become vested in certain families. Reduced to a handful of mountaineers, the Assyrians felt that only the continuity secured by the hereditary principle would enable them to hold their own ; that they could not afford to be weakened by the internal conflicts inseparable in the circumstances, as they knew well, from a system of free election. They do not defend this practice—which is known as that of the *natar kursiya*, " the Holder of the Chair "—on the ground that it is canonical, for they admit that it is not. But they claim that it is the only one that could save from extinction a small remnant such as theirs, struggling for its very existence in hostile surroundings. The life the Assyrians lived on the borderlands of Turkey and Persia from this time onwards

until the Great War has been likened to that of the Highlanders of Scotland under the Stuart kings. It was a feudal, tribal life of constant fighting, each clan led by its own *Malik*, each *Malik* following the anointed Patriarch and feudal lord of the whole nation. Some clans, exempt from taxation (because the tax-collector could not get at them) and only paying tribute through their Patriarch, enjoyed the higher status of '*ashiret* [1]; others, more easily accessible to their foes, were *rayahs* and subject both to Turk and to Kurd. To '*ashiret* as well as to *rayah* the Kurd was the enemy, ever ready to raid and to plunder, more numerous and better armed than the Christian. But let it not be supposed that the Assyrian was content to turn the other cheek. This hardy mountain-people is a Church militant in the most literal sense of the term; and that it gave as good as it received may be inferred from the circumstance that, if Kurds address their dogs in Syriac, the Assyrians speak to theirs in Kurdish.

If the people of Mar Shimun have lost the proud position they held in the past, they have not lost their capacity for producing martyrs. Insufficiently realized is the colossal risk that was taken by " our smallest ally " when, hazarding its all, it threw its lot in with the Entente. The Assyrians' part in the Great War was but a " side-show " in that vast

[1] Lit. tribe, clan.

drama, but they staked their very existence as a people on what they believed to be right. The story of their participation in the struggle has been told well elsewhere,[1] and I need do no more than give its briefest outlines. In the spring of 1915 the nation took to arms in response to an appeal for co-operation from the Russians, then advancing on Van, although the Turks had threatened the Patriarch, Mar Benjamin Shimun, who was then only twenty-four years of age, that they would kill his younger brother Hormizd, who happened to be in Constantinople for his education, if his people did not keep quiet. Mar Shimun's answer was as follows : " My people are my sons, and they are many. Hormizd my brother is but one. Let him therefore give his life for the nation." In making this reply the Patriarch knew well that the threat was no empty one : Hormizd was put to death, a sacrifice on the altar of loyalty.

Although forced out of its mountains by Kurds and Turks before the end of the year, the Assyrian people was able, by a masterly retreat, to reach safety in the plain of Urumiah. Here, for about twenty months, it contrived to hold its own in the welter of confusion that reigned in this junction of the three

[1] In the plain, unvarnished tale of Surma Khanum, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-114 ; and in Wigram, *Our Smallest Ally*, and Austin, *The Baqubah Refugee Camp*, both published by the Faith Press, London, 1920.

Empires—Persian, Russian, and Turkish ; but the Russian *débacle* in the autumn of 1917 meant inevitable disaster. In February, 1918, the gallant young Patriarch, who had proved himself a true leader of his people, was treacherously murdered by a Kurdish leader named Simco Agha, who was ostensibly his ally ; by November of the same year those who remained of the nation had to seek shelter, after a terrible Odyssey, in the camp of refuge which the British army established for them at Baquba.

My first personal experience of the Assyrians was gained in Tiflis in 1920, when I had charge of the British Political Mission to the three Trans-caucasian Republics. In Tiflis had taken sanctuary, so far back as 1915, some thousands of the Nestorians who dwelt on the Persian side of the Turco-Persian frontier and had followed the Russians after their evacuation of Urumiah in the early days of that year. Unable thereafter, owing to the Turkish advance in the Caucasus, to rejoin their compatriots and to take a part in their subsequent adventures, these people perforce remained in Georgia, cut off from their main body and in dire financial distress. Most of the men were masons by trade, but conditions were then too unstable, even in Georgia, to make much building possible. I was enabled by the generosity of the Lord Mayor's Fund for the Armenians to dole out periodical sums of money to the most destitute

of these families ; and I was pleased to recognize some of my acquaintances of those days at the *divan* of Mar Shimun in Mosul, four years afterwards.

The Patriarch's *divan* at Qudshanes before the war must have been an interesting gathering. It was regularly frequented by all who had business with Mar Shimun, as well as by visitors ; and it was here, after the ceremonial drinking of coffee, that the *maliks* and lesser notables brought forward such matters as required the Patriarch's decision and that the affairs of the nation were conducted. In Mosul the receptions of the Patriarch *en exil* were necessarily of a more restricted character, but were attended, none the less, by some notable personalities. When I paid my first visit to Mar Shimun there were present, beside his aunt Surma Khanum, the Metropolitan of Shemsdinan, Mar Yusuf, and the Patriarch's father, David, who was one of the leaders in the Assyrian campaigns during the war and is now the senior Assyrian officer of the "levies."[1] Another visitor was Mar Sergis, the fighting Bishop of Jilu and Baz, who had helped to relieve Amadia from Turcophil Kurds in 1922 and had come into Mosul to receive from the Government a reward for the services he rendered on that

[1] The "levies," who are employed by the British Government, are popularly known as *'asker George*, in distinction from the troops of the 'Iraq Government, who are *'asker Feisal*.

Plate VII

Mar Shimun XXI. with Surma Khanum and the Metropolitan of Shemsdinan

occasion. A portly, jolly-looking gentleman with a red face and a black beard, he was dressed in reefer and trousers of coarse blue serge, and, but for his turban, would have suggested a seafaring character in the works of W. W. Jacobs. At the end of the room, smoking a *chibuq*, sat an aged priest of the old school, whose hair hung down in pig-tails below a white conical felt hat, precisely resembling the *petasus* of Hermes. At the back stood in a row several picturesque retainers, whose dress consisted of bandoliers, a bonnet of the type seen on ancient Assyrian bas-reliefs, and wide bell-shaped trousers of green and purple-striped cotton.

A word may be said in passing of the cathedral of the Bishop of Jilu, the famous Church of Mar Zeia. Until it was sacked in the course of the Great War, this church, although of extreme antiquity, had never been plundered, and it was the nearest approach to a museum to be found in the territory of the Nestorians. The men of Jilu have always been wanderers on the face of the earth, frequently (in more recent times) as seekers of contributions from abroad in relief of Nestorians in general and of themselves in particular ; and they have been accustomed to enrich their church, after a safe return, with *ex voto* offerings of every kind. The practice evidently dates back to the earliest periods of Nestorian history, for among the rarest treasures of the

church were the porcelain jars (now smashed, alas, by vandal Kurds) brought back from China by the Nestorian missionaries of the seventh and eighth centuries. The talisman that had protected the shrine was an Arabic *firman* on a piece of linen, supposed to have been written by the Prophet himself on his own napkin. Potent the charm must certainly have been, for the man who despoiled the church, the eldest son of Simco Agha, did not long survive this act of brutal and wanton destruction. "As he stood at the church door superintending the removal of the plunder, a shot fired at extreme range took him in the head, and he fell in front of the church that he was desecrating." [1]

Even now the future of the Assyrians is not assured. Much depends on the final settlement with Turkey, for most of their mountain-valleys, including the Patriarchal seat of Qudshanes, lie to the north of the present provisional frontier of 'Iraq. In Mosul they are still refugees, although it has been found possible to settle some of them in empty villages and to employ others in the Assyrian "levies." It was during the Baquba period that the brother and successor of Benjamin, Mar Polus (Paul) Shimun, died of consumption, and that his young nephew Isha'i (Jesse), then a child of twelve, was consecrated as Mar Shimun XXI. Guided by that able lady,

[1] Wigram, *Our Smallest Ally*, p. 21.

Surma Khanum, who pleaded the Assyrian cause at the Peace Conference, and by Mar Yusuf, the Metropolitan of Shemsdinan, the boy-Patriarch is growing up to the realization of his strange responsibilities in a period of heavy anxieties for his decimated flock. From his aunt he received a grounding in English, which is standing him in good stead now that he is completing his education in England; and both he and his people long for a period of stability under the 'Iraq Government and the British connexion. And those, to whose imagination this little heir to a mighty tradition makes appeal, must hope that a Mar Shimun may reign once more in his ancestral home by the banks of the Zab, one of the rivers of Paradise, and may yet again date his encyclicals according to the ancient form: "From my cell on the River of the Garden of Eden."

CHAPTER VIII

MONASTERIES OF THE MONOPHYSITES

Among the many tombs of Old Testament worthies to be found in Mesopotamia one of the most revered is that of the Prophet Nahum, the el-Koshite, which is shown in the village of Al Qosh, a day's journey to the north of Mosul. Some purists, indeed, suggest that the prophet hailed from a Palestinian Kosh, and that the name of the Al Qosh near Mosul is but the Turkish or Turkoman for " red bird." Others point out that Nahum was of the children of the Captivity, and that none but a native of the country could have denounced Nineveh with such intimate local knowledge as did he. But be this as it may; for there are more interesting objects in Al Qosh than the doubtful grave of a minor prophet.

One of the most distinctive features of primitive Oriental Christianity was the impulse that drove men to lead the lives of hermits in regions remote from the distractions and temptations of the world. Certain districts soon acquired especial repute as favoured of these anchorites : the deserts of Nitria

and the Thebaid, the cliffs and slopes of Mount Athos, the Jordan valley and its tributary *wadis*, the pillars of the Jebel Siman. Still farther from the great centres of civilization of those days were the ranges of Western Kurdistan, the mountains which run intermittently from the Euphrates to the Tigris

above Urfa, Mardin, Nisibin and Mosul. Here Monophysite and Nestorian ascetics established themselves first as solitaries, then in groups of twos and threes, and ultimately, when they gathered round the cell of some eremite of pre-eminent sanctity, in regular monasteries. It is one of the most remarkable of such establishments, the monastery of Rabban[1] Hormizd, that lends importance to Al Qosh.

Immediately behind the village there rises abruptly to a considerable height a semi-circular cliff, marking

[1] *Rabban* is Syriac for " monk."

precisely and without gradation the northern end of the Mosul plain and the beginning of the mountains. In the sixth century this lofty natural theatre of barren rock, far from the haunts of men, attracted a Persian hermit named Hormizd, who burrowed for himself a cave in the face of the cliff. Soon his fame attracted other holy men to his distant eyrie ; and it was not long before the perpendicular wall of rock was pitted with hundreds of similar caves or nests. In due course one chapel, then another, was hollowed out of the cliff ; and, when the community grew too large for these, churches were built on ledges of rock and on terraces laboriously raised on the mountain side. But Rabban Hormizd himself remained in his unlit cell in the heart of the mountain, mortifying the flesh like an Indian *saddhu*.

Visitors are shown to this day two iron rings fastened to the ceiling of the cell ; from these rings depended the ropes which supported the Rabban in a kneeling position for many consecutive years. They are also shown, affixed to the wall, an iron collar, wherein lunatics in search of healing are tethered for a night. By morning, as Dr. Wigram shrewdly remarks, the patient, unless very mad indeed, generally professes himself cured. Rabban Hormizd's only excursion into the outer world was a descent, single-handed, upon the great Jacobite monastery of Deir Mattai, perched, in a fashion not

Rabban Hormizd

unlike that of his own sanctuary, on the heights of the Jebel Maqlub. The Jebel Maqlub is an isolated *massif* rising from the Mosul plain some fifty miles to the south-east, and, as a hot-bed of his hated Monophysite rivals, was regarded by our Rabban with the deepest enmity. Received hospitably, if with surprise, by the monks of Deir Mattai, the zealous Hormizd stole at dead of night into their library, where, like Moses, he produced from the floor a miraculous flow of water. With this he washed the parchment leaves of his hosts' heretical volumes clear of all writing, and at dawn returned triumphant, not to leave it again, to his own mountain.

If the hermits of an early age elected from motives of piety to establish their settlements on heights difficult of access, their mediaeval successors remained there for other reasons. The monks of the Middle Ages clung to altitudes as a refuge not so much from temptation as from the marauding armies that tended to make the plains unsafe for those of the contemplative life. But in the sixties of the last century the monks of Rabban Hormizd (by this time the monastery had passed to the Chaldaeans) thought, with a poor prophetic instinct, that wars had ceased in Kurdistan. They proceeded, therefore, to build a large new monastery at Al Qosh, at the foot of their mountain, the better to supervise their fields and vineyards in the plain.

Only three monks now reside in the original hermitage, the majority of the Fathers and all the novices having moved to the new house below. And a very pleasant monastery it is, with spacious quadrangles, airy rooms and a dignified church, in which is the burial-place of the Patriarchs of Babylon. The library has also been transferred from the upper monastery, and is now housed in two small chambers adjoining the church, filled to the ceiling with Estrangelo, East Syriac and Karshuni manuscripts. Perhaps a few words in explanation of these terms may not be amiss. Estrangelo (a corruption of the Greek στρογγυλός, " round ") is the earliest form of the Syriac alphabet, and from it are derived the East Syriac and West Syriac scripts, as they are used to-day. The distinction between East Syriac and West Syriac arose with the division of the Syriac-speaking Syrians and Mesopotamians into Nestorians and Monophysites, when the former, with its squarer characters,[1] became the dialect of the Nestorians, and the latter that of the Jacobites and Maronites. Karshuni is Arabic written in Syriac characters, and arose through Syriac-speaking people hearing and talking Arabic without being able to write it.

This custom of writing one language in the script

[1] The block reproduced on p. 84 shews the East Syriac character; the inscription below the portrait of the Jacobite Patriarch Mar Ignatius III., the West Syriac, which is also known as *Serto*.

of another is a very common phenomenon in the Near and Middle East, and is one of peculiar interest and significance in view of the light which it sheds on the political vicissitudes of Eastern peoples. The habit has been practised from pre-Christian times, for we find tablets bearing Sumerian and Assyrian words transcribed in Greek characters. We also find Aramaic-speaking feudatories of the Seleucids in Southern Mesopotamia adopting the Greek language, but writing it, and even engraving it on their coins,[1] through sheer force of habit, from right to left. One of the most striking examples of the practice is afforded by Coptic, which is written in the Greek character, with the addition of only eight signs retained from demotic Egyptian. It has been said well that " the romance of language could go no further than to join the speech of Pharaoh and the writing of Homer in the service-book of an Egyptian Christian." Hebrew characters are sometimes the vehicle for Arabic, particularly among Tunisian Jews ; while, *vice versa*, there are Hebrew books printed in Arabic characters. Stumbling by chance, one day in Constantinople, into a small prayer-house of the Qaraite sect, I was shewn a parchment manuscript in the Hebrew character, the language whereof, as I was told to my surprise, was

[1] J. de Morgan, *Manuel de Numismatique Orientale*, Paris, 1924, p. 197.

Greek; while Parry[1] relates that he found at Midhiat in the Tur 'Abdin a ninth century copy of the Gospels in the Greek tongue, but written in Estrangelo. In certain of the Aegean islands that came under the rule of Frankish dynasts after the Fourth Crusade, notably in Chios, Naxos and Santorin, Greek is written in Roman characters. This curious blend is known as *Franko-chiotika*, and is much in vogue, even now, among the Greek-speaking Roman Catholic and Uniate families of Latin descent in those islands. Turkish, having been for so long a period the official language of a State that contained many non-Turkish races, has had an equally varied experience in this direction. It appears in Northern Mesopotamia in Syriac characters; it appears, in Constantinople and in the vilayets with an Armenian population, in Armenian; and it appears, for the benefit of Anatolian Greeks, who know something of Greek writing but only speak Turkish, in Greek. When I first visited Constantinople there was being published (and may still be published, for aught I know to the contrary) a newspaper in this odd combination, entitled Ἡ Ἀνατολή; and I treasure several books, now decidedly rare, printed in this manner in the eighteenth century for the use of the Turcophone Orthodox of Asia Minor. With less satisfaction do I recall the letters in the Turkish language,

[1] *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery*, p. 338.

vilely scrawled in cursive modern Greek script, which it fell to my lot to censor at Mudros during the War. Finally, I may mention the Ossetes of the Caucasus, better known to history as the Alans, who, on the rare occasions when they feel the need to print their peculiar tongue, employ a mixture of Roman and Cyrillic type. At irregular intervals during 1920 a copy of the one and only Ossete newspaper, thus printed, would appear on my breakfast table in Tiflis, ultimately to find its way, I fear unperused, into the shelves of the Bodleian.

But it is time to return to our monasteries. The prior of Al Qosh, who is *ex officio* the superior of all the monks of the Chaldaean Church, received us with much kindness, and did the honours of his convent with true Eastern hospitality. Although himself, with his monks, in the depths of the Lenten fast, the admirable man produced for us, on the evening of our arrival, not only a good red wine made in the monastery, but a stew of meat, onions and apricots, a combination which sounds odd in theory but proved excellent in practice. A few days after our departure, emulating old Hormizd, we visited Deir Mattai, its site easily visible across the intervening plain from the upper monastery. Centuries ago the Jebel Maqlub teemed with flourishing Monophysite sanctuaries, was a sort of Mount Athos of the Jacobite Church. Now, Mongol invasions

and the constant pillaging of Kurds have dimmed the lustre of what was a perfect mirror of Church life in this corner of the East ; and of all these monasteries only Deir Mattai survives. Until recent times Deir Mattai was the residence of a curious dignitary peculiar to the Jacobite Church, the *Mafrian*, who was a sort of Deputy Patriarch for the Eastern dioceses, with almost complete autonomy ; and in this capacity it housed the great mediaeval scholar of the Jacobite Church, the famous Barhebraeus. The office of *Mafrian* is now in abeyance, but Deir Mattai is a bishopric to this day, although only the bishop and two monks now live there. The former has jurisdiction over a few Jacobite villages, which still exist in the vicinity ; from one of the latter I had the good fortune to buy, in Barhebraeus's own monastery, a Syriac manuscript work of the great divine. It is an interesting fact, illustrating the conservatism of the Oriental Churches, that the Jacobites continue to date their years, on formal occasions, from the Seleucid era of Antioch (311 B.C.), fixed in the year when Seleucus Nicator entered Babylon as conqueror, reserving the Christian era for affairs of every-day life. If, therefore, you see a Jacobite book or inscription dated 1925, you must remember that it denotes, not the present year of grace, but the *Yunani* (" Greek ") equivalent of our 1614.

Jacobite Monk of Deir Mattai

Tomb of Mar Behnam

The Jacobites of Mṣul and the Jebel Maqlub are the easternmost outpost of this old and interesting Church and people, which owes its name (its formal title is the " Syrian Orthodox Church ") to the sixth century Bishop Jacob Baradai, the organizer of the Monophysite Church in Mesopotamia and Northern Syria. The nucleus of the nation has always dwelt in and around Mardin and in the mountainous district of the Tur 'Abdin, where, in the monastery of Deir Za'feran, is the Patriarchal residence. Unluckily for the Jacobites this region is in Turkish territory; and they have been subjected, since February, 1924, to a renewal of the persecution they underwent during the War. In the spring of 1924 the Patriarch, Mar Ignatius Elias III.,[1] was expelled from his monastery, which was turned into a Turkish barrack; and from 30,000 to 40,000 souls, representing the bulk of what is left of this small nation, have wandered as refugees towards Aleppo. It is to be hoped that they will be enabled to surmount their present dangers; it would be tragic indeed were this interesting survival, with its venerable language, customs and liturgy, to be extinguished.

The Jacobites are the natives—once Aramaic-speaking and now Syriac-speaking—of Mesopotamia

[1] Since 1292 all the Jacobite Patriarchs have taken the name Ignatius.

and Northern Syria, who, after the controversies over the nature of Christ discussed in Chapter V., neither remained Orthodox nor became Nestorian. They are the people who, partly, at all events, of the same blood as the Nestorians, adopted, as did the Copts, the Monophysism which became in Egypt the national Church of the native Christians. Thus the Jacobites, although they did not become the national Church of Syria, where they were at no time as numerous as the Orthodox, remain to this day in communion with the Copts. After the Arab conquest they received the same treatment from their Moslem rulers as did the Orthodox and the Nestorians, and they became, like these, a *millet* of *rayahs*. Unlike the Nestorians, however, they have few brilliant pages in their history, which is one of obstinate tenacity in the face of servitude and oppression rather than of glorious and almost world-wide expansion. Yet they extended their activities into the territory of the Nestorians and had bishoprics in Persia ; and, as we have seen, the majority of the non-Uniate Christians of Malabar acknowledge, by a curious freak of history, the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. They alone among the Churches have retained as their liturgy the oldest, the most apostolic of all the rites, that of Antioch or S. James. And, despite their small numbers, they were distinguished in the Middle Ages for their learning and for their

flourishing schools of theology, history, philosophy and science. Their greatest scholar, possibly their greatest man in every respect, was Barhebraeus, whose real name was Gregory John Abu'l-Faraj. Barhebraeus (in Arabic *Ibn Ibri*) was born in 1225 and died in 1286, after being first bishop, then *Mafrian*. He was so eminent not only in learning but in the rarer qualities of Christian charity that even Gibbon omits in his case the scoffs which he is wont to direct (not always, indeed, unjustly) at the episcopacy. "In his life," he says, "he was an elegant writer of the Syriac and Arabic tongues, a poet, physician and historian, a subtle philosopher, and a moderate divine. In his death his funeral was attended by his rival, the Nestorian Patriarch, with a train of Greeks and Armenians, who forgot their disputes, and mingled their tears over the grave of an enemy." This was no mean tribute in the East, where the *odium theologicum* has ever tended to accompany stedfastness in the faith; and it was as creditable to our friend Mar Yahb-Allaha III., and to his Orthodox and Armenian companions, as to the object of their laments.

Behind the main church of Deir Mattai is a small sepulchral chapel, where Barhebraeus and several of his successors are buried beneath slabs of the grey Mosul alabaster. Over the grave of Barhebraeus

and his brother is the following epitaph in Karshuni :

> " This is the grave of Mar Gregory John and of Mar Bar-soma his brother, the children of the Hebrew, on Mount Elpep."[1]

Then follow two lines, said to have been composed by Barhebraeus himself :

> "O net of the world, in the year 1536 thou didst catch me ;
> But my hope is that in 1597 I shall not be in thee."[2]

At a little distance from the monastery there is a cave with older tombs, including that of an irritable Egyptian bishop of the ninth or tenth century. A recently deceased monk of Deir Mattai once had the temerity to open his grave and to abstract one of his arm-bones as a gift to a pious friend in Mosul. Immediately the other arm shot out of the tomb, and gave the monk so violent a slap on the face that he carried his head on one side for the rest of his days. There was no more interference thereafter with this peevish prelate from the banks of the Nile. The history of one of the two surviving monks is a curious one. Before the War a merchant trading in a small

[1] The Syriac name of the Jebel Maqlub.

[2] *Cf.* Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, i., p. 97. The years 1536 and 1597 are those of the Seleucid era, corresponding with our 1225 and 1286 ; so the hope of Barhebraeus was duly fulfilled.

Monastery of Mar Behnam

Syrian Catholic Monks of Mar Behnam

way between Erbil and Kirkuk, he had once, in the eighties of the last century, spent two weeks in Petrograd, visiting an uncle who there kept a shop. Conscribed by the Turks during the war, albeit an elderly man, there came to light the fact of this journey to Russia in his youth, and he was sentenced to death on the trumped-up charge of being in communication with the enemy. He then vowed that, if saved, he would embrace the religious life ; and, after two fellow-Christians condemned with him had already been hanged, saved he was, through the intervention of the Turkish Deputy for Kirkuk, who knew him and learned just in time of his plight. He kept his vow, and is now an ascetic in this ancient hermitage, a place rarely visited except in the summer, when Jacobite families of Mosul repair thither for a change of air.

In the plain of Mosul, interspersed among Assyrian *tells* and Arab, Turkoman, Yezidi and Shebek settlements, are many Christian villages of considerable interest. Thus, the mixed Jacobite and Yezidi Ba'ashiqa, which nestles at the foot of the Jebel Maqlub, was famous in olden times for a plant which cured scrofula and haemorrhoids. In Bartalla, likewise Jacobite, the Church of Mart Ishmuna boasts a harrowing altar-curtain, depicting the saint and her husband witnessing the slaughter of their seven children by the wicked King Antiochus. It was

pleasing, incidentally, to find the parish-priest of this Monophysite village rejoicing in the name of Nestorius. In the neighbouring Chaldaean village of Keremleis, which I visited on a Sunday, it was delightful to see the entire male population playing a primitive eastern form of hockey on the village green beside the ancient Assyrian mound, their bright Kurdish kirtles and thick bobbed hair flying in picturesque disorder as they dashed up and down the wide open space in pursuit of the ball. Beyond Keremleis lies Qara Qosh, which is Syrian Catholic and has seven mediaeval churches ; then comes the Moslem Khidr Elias, the property of the adjoining monastery of Mar Behnam. Mar Behnam was originally Jacobite but is now Syrian Catholic ; for when Jacobites and Nestorians became respectively Syrian Catholics and Chaldaeans they brought with them, as we have noticed, into their new fold, unlike seceders in Scotland, their ancient churches and endowments. The monastery is one of the most interesting Christian monuments in 'Iraq, and countless traditions have gathered around its patron saint, the son, one is assured, of Sennacherib himself. Chronology is apt, in a land like Mesopotamia, whose records go back to the dawn of history, to become somewhat confused in the popular mind ; but every one seems to be agreed that Behnam, even if not an ancient Assyrian, was unquestionably of royal birth.

Possibly he was the son of some local satrap or kinglet of the Sassanid Empire, for he embraced Christianity in the fourth century, after seeing the founder of the monastery of Deir Mattai cure his sister Sarah of leprosy in a sulphurous stream, which Mar Mattai produced miraculously from the ground. Stucco reliefs of the knightly saint on horseback and of his patently leprous sister adorn the interior of the church, remarkable likewise for its mediaeval carvings and panels of marble inscribed in a variety of tongues. One of these records a State visit to the monastery of Hulagu Khan, more tolerant of Christians than the bloodthirsty Timur.

Church and monastery buildings are enclosed by a fortress-like wall of considerable age, while the tomb of Mar Behnam is housed in a domed semi-underground building at the foot of a little hill outside the enclosure. This building is window-less and door-less, being lighted by two small apertures in the drum of the dome and entered by a subterranean passage connecting it with a baptistery, likewise detached. The saint must be popular indeed in Kurdistan and its neighbour-lands, for around the walls of his mausoleum are inscriptions not only in Estrangelo and East Syriac, but in Pehlevi and Arabic and even in Armenian. When we arrived at the monastery a wedding had just been celebrated, and the costumes of the little bride and her friends, gaily

coloured with all manner of local vegetable dyes, made an attractive picture in the golden light of the noonday sun.

In the opposite direction, north of Mosul, I have a pleasing recollection of the Chaldaean Tell Usquf (" the Bishop's Hill "), whose priest, Qasha Hormizd, is rector and squire combined. To see the old man reclining on his divan, while obsequious dependents lighted and re-lighted his enormous silver *chibuq*, was to witness a domestic scene of eighteenth century Turkey. Even more agreeable was the impression made by Tell Keif, the most important Chaldaean —and Christian—village of the countryside, with a population of some 7,000 souls. The Tell Keifis are an enterprising people, who are found not only throughout 'Iraq, where they are employed as deck-hands on the river-steamers and as waiters in the hotels, but as successful emigrants in North and South America. It is not, however, the men who attract one the most, for they, despite their energy, are prone to drunkenness, and spend their Sundays, after listening to an open-air sermon, in absorbing the arrack they manufacture during the week. But their women-folk and children are as delightful in appearance as in their manners, and the latter have a pretty habit of kissing the hands of Christian visitors. This custom is the more pleasing since the girls of Tell Keif are the handsomest, in feature and

Girls' School, Tell Keif

Open-air Sermon, Tell Keif

dress, in all Mesopotamia, and have had the good sense to retain, unlike so many Orientals, their traditional garb. I know no women's costume in the Balkans, in the Caucasus, in Syria or Palestine, which can match that of Tell Keif in colour and sheer beauty ; the old dresses of some of the islands of the Dodecanese can alone, so far as the Near East is concerned, approach it. The little girls of the village school of Tell Keif, in their vivid yellows and greens and reds, their silks and old brocades, their silver girdles and golden necklaces, their bright kerchiefs and (a curious touch) the little jewelled ring worn through the right nostril, can only be likened to a brilliant garden of flowers.

CHAPTER IX

THE WORSHIPPERS OF SATAN

In the Jebel Sinjar to the west of Mosul and in the district of the Sheikhan to the north-east of it there dwell the peculiar people known variously to the world at large as Yezidis and Devil-worshippers. To all appearance of Kurdish stock and speaking a Kurdish dialect, their own name for themselves is "Dasnayi"; the meaning of the term Yezidi, applied to them by their neighbours, is uncertain. The Shiah Moslems, by way of adding to the odium which their beliefs have brought upon the Yezidis, like to ascribe their foundation to Yezid ibn Mu'awiya, the murderer of the Shiah hero Husein; but their origin is infinitely more remote than the times of the fourth Khalif and his luckless sons.

More convincing is the derivation from Yazdan, which is a Persian name of the Supreme Being; for the Almighty enjoys among the Yezidis a remote and abstract supremacy, although it is in truth little more than a *succès d'estime*. Their more serious attention is bestowed upon him whom we denominate, when

we wish to be polite, the Fallen Angel, but whom they regard as invested by the Lord of All with full authority over this world below. Hence, although it may be difficult to love him, the Devil is a power to be propitiated, to be treated with all respect; hence their terror lest anyone should pronounce in their hearing the accursed word *Sheitan*. For this is the opprobrious name bestowed on the subject of their devotions by those who, in their ignorance, regard him as the spirit of evil, working in opposition to the Almighty; whereas all Yezidis know him for a supernatural potentate of the first magnitude, who has received for his activities a Divine *carte blanche*.

Hence, too, this ubiquitous, if not precisely benevolent power is personified in a fashion very different from that obtaining among those who mistake him for Beelzebub. No cloven hoofs and forked tail, no horns and luminous eyes, figure in the Yezidi iconography. It is as the regal, the divine peacock, as Melek Taus, the Peacock Angel or King, that Satan is visualized by his fearful but faithful followers. It is, indeed, not impossible that Melek Taus was once Melek Θεός, "the Lord God,"[1] and was originally the attribute of the Almighty; that the title was snatched from the feeble hands of Yazdan by the celestial Mayor of the Palace and

[1] For this theory *cf.* Nau, *Recueil de Textes et de Documents sur les Yezidis*, pp. 16, 114.

conferred, with an altered meaning, upon himself. This theory does, at all events, advance matters somewhat; for the obvious relationship between *taus* (طاوس), the Persian word for a peacock, and its Greek equivalent, ταώς, does not serve to explain how the peacock, the beautiful emblem of immortality of the early Christians in the catacombs of Rome, has become, among the Yezidis, the personification of the devil. Another theory, reading Taus as the Arabic *tas*, translates "the bright Angel"; a third sees in Taus none other than Tammuz, of whom there is some mention, as Adonis, in Chapter I. Whatever be the true explanation of this vexed problem, the bronze peacock, Melek Taus, is the *sanjaq*, the banner, the Palladium of the Yezidi people, the one object of their ritual never shown to those outside the fold. There are seven images of the sacred bird, one of which remains permanently at the central shrine of Sheikh 'Adi. The others are carried periodically through the several Yezidi districts to stimulate the piety and the alms-giving of the faithful.

This, then, is the fundamental article of the Yezidi belief, the worship of the Peacock Angel, but it is by no means the only one. The recognition of the principles of good and evil, which it perpetuates, is derived in all likelihood from the Persian dualists; from Persia, too, the Yezidis may have drawn their

cult of the sun, for Urumiah, the birthplace of Zoroaster, is very near to the lands of the "Dasnayi." On the other hand, their sun-worship may be much older, for they adore him at his rising and setting and kiss the spot on which his ray first rests; and on great festivals they sacrifice white oxen at his shrine. Now we know that the Assyrians dedicated bulls to the sun; and what is more likely than that this strange people, whose origin and beliefs point to a remote antiquity, should be a remnant of the race which once ruled in this very region? Another circumstance, which lends support to this theory, is the extreme hairiness of the Yezidis. The men, almost without exception, have beards abnormally long and curly, and their hair is as coarse and thick as that of the hairy Ainus. When we consider how prominent a part is played by the beard in Assyrian sculpture, it is impossible not to be struck by this curious parallel.

Nothing if not broad-minded, the Yezidis regard as inspired the Old and New Testaments and the Qoran. They accept the divinity of Christ, but believe that His reign will not come until that of the Devil is over, and that the latter has another 4,000 years to run. The language of their prayers is Arabic, although they do not understand it; and they assert that the water of the sacred spring at Sheikh 'Adi is miraculously derived from the well

Zemzem at Mecca. They circumcize with the Moslems (although this may be a measure of self-protection), they baptize with the Christians, they abstain with the Jews from unlawful foods, they abhor with the Mandaeans the colour blue. Moses, Mani, Melek 'Isa (Jesus), Mohammed and even the Imam Mahdi combine with Melek Taus to produce a medley of undigested and half-understood tenets unequalled in any other sect. That no teacher has come forward to blend these ill-assorted beliefs into a somewhat more congruous whole is probably due to the ignorance which is almost an article of faith among them. Before the War the arts of reading and writing were confined by an old tradition to a single family ; and when, after the Armistice, the British Administration determined to open a school in the Jebel Sinjar, many obstacles were encountered. The Arabic letter representing the sound *sh*, and words rhyming with *sheitan*, had first to be eliminated from the text-books ; and *shatt*, the usual Mesopotamian word for river, had to be replaced by the synonym *nahr*. The school, opened in the face of much opposition, did not survive for long. After a few weeks four pupils were drowned while fording a river swollen by the rains, whereupon the Yezidis regarded their aversion from learning as divinely (or infernally) vindicated.

The forbidden foods of the Yezidis are peculiar.

They include the cock, owing to his supposed resemblance to the peacock; they include lettuce, beans, and pumpkins; they also include fish, as a delicate compliment to Jonah, whose influence, apparently universal in these parts, extends even to the "Dasnayi." The flesh of the gazelle may not be eaten, because the eyes of the gazelle resemble those of Sheikh 'Adi. Although, as we have seen, letters are not encouraged among them, the Yezidis possess certain sacred writings, the principal ones being the "Book of Revelation" (*Kitab al-Jalweh*) and the later "Black Book" (*Kitab al-aswad*). The *Kitab al-Jalweh* is a sort of proclamation, setting forth his might and powers, addressed by Satan to his faithful followers. It begins with the words: "I was, I am, and I shall be unto the end of time, ruling over all creatures and ordering the affairs and deeds of those who are under my sway"; and it ends by enjoining on his people the need for secrecy with regard to his teachings. The "Black Book" is a fantastic account of the Creation, and of the origin of the Yezidis.[1] The "Dasnayi," shrouding these

[1] These books, together with other original documents concerning the religious practices of the Yezidis, are translated in Nau, *op. cit.*, and Stevens, *By Tigris and Euphrates*. Père Anastase Marie of Baghdad has published (in *Anthropos*, vol. vi., 1911) text and translation of the "Black Book"; Parry gives translations of the *Kitab al-Jalweh* and of an Arabic manuscript history of the Yezidis. Badger and Nau give translations of the

works in mystery, have failed to qualify for the favourable treatment accorded by Moslems to the "People of the Book." Not even the catholicity of their beliefs has saved them from unpopularity and even persecution. Layard gives, in his *Nineveh and its Remains*, a graphic account of how they were decimated by the Kurdish Beg of Rowanduz, who pursued those of the Sheikhan to Mosul, and massacred the wretched fugitives on the hill of Qoyunjik within full view of the exulting Moslawis. Soon afterwards came the turn of the Sinjar; and there were massacres of Yezidis in 1892 and during the Great War. There cannot now be more, at the outside, than 50,000 survivors, including the Yezidis in Transcaucasia, of a race which a hundred years ago mustered well over a quarter of a million. The steadfastness of the Yezidi under persecution is the more remarkable in that Melek Taus seems an uninspiring deity, for whom to die. His cult rests on a basis of fear and expediency, from which love is wholly absent, yet scarcely ever have his followers been known to abjure, even when faced with torture and death, their singularly negative creed. If the Devil's

"Poem of Sheikh 'Adi," the only one of their books which the Yezidis shew willingly. Mgr. Giamil has published in the original East Syriac, with an Italian translation, an account of the Yezidi beliefs compiled, in the form of question and answer, by a Chaldaean priest. See the bibliography at end of this volume, p. 157.

hope of redemption lies in the number of his martyrs, the Yezidis' faith in him may yet be justified !

The Yezidi is a gentle being, whose sufferings have left their mark in his cowed and melancholy demeanour. His chief enemy is the Turk ; but to the Christian minorities, especially to the Nestorians, he is drawn by the bond of a common oppression. It must be accounted unto the Yezidis for righteousness that during the War, albeit themselves heavily oppressed, they gave shelter to hundreds of Armenian refugees, who had managed to crawl from Deir al-Zor to the Jebel Sinjar in the course of the great Armenian massacres, and that they stoutly refused to surrender them despite the persuasions and threats of the Turks.

The Yezidi Mecca is the shrine of Sheikh 'Adi, called after two persons of the same name, the one a Sufi saint of the twelfth century, the other a Kurdish gardener of the thirteenth, who appear to have been blended in the course of time into one nebulous identity. The Sufi 'Adi was a scion of the Omayyad dynasty, a Moslem, whose precise rôle *dans cette galère* seems a little obscure. But a Syriac manuscript written in 1452,[1] which sees in the Yezidi Sheikh not the Arab mystic but the Kurdish gardener, is a little more precise. According to this account the shrine, which now

[1] Published by Nau, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-8, 31-77.

bears his name, was a Nestorian monastery, of which 'Adi was the steward until he and his sons, having espoused Mongol wives, turned against their employers and reversed their respective functions. At first they contented themselves with reducing the holy men to the position of shepherds of their own flocks; but ultimately they murdered them and seized the convent. It is true that the author of this manuscript is a Nestorian monk, presumably with a bias towards a Nestorian origin of the property; but it establishes the tradition current on the subject only two centuries after the second 'Adi's death.

Before visiting Sheikh 'Adi we stayed for a day and a night with Said Beg, the hereditary Mir of the Yezidis, in his castle at Ba Idri in the Sheikhan. Ba Idri, distant a few miles from Al Qosh, is an Oriental version of the true feudal stronghold of the Middle Ages. It stands assertively on the top of a small plateau or hill, while the houses of the village, each one surmounted by its stork's nest, crouch obediently at the bottom, some hundreds of feet below. The relative positions of castle and village symbolize not inaccurately the relations which exist between the Mir and his people.

Over the Yezidis the Mir exercises an absolute and autocratic sway. The best lands, the handsomest women are his without question, and he is supported

The Mir of the Yezidis

Ba Idri: Court and Haremlik

by an annual due levied in money and kind upon all his subjects. So, while they are poor, he is tolerably rich, and is the proud possessor of five American motor-cars. Nevertheless, his position has its drawbacks, for rarely does a Mir of the Yezidis die in his bed. Said Beg's great-grandfather, 'Ali Beg, was

killed by the aforementioned Rowanduz Kurds ; his father, another 'Ali Beg, was shot by his mother's paramour, with the connivance, it is said, of the lady. This was the 'Ali Beg, to whom Layard stood godfather, not without qualms as to the exact measure of responsibility which a Christian was assuming in sponsoring a devil-worshipping baby. Nor is Said Beg likely to make old bones, for he loves to look upon the wine when it is red and, above all, upon the arrack when it is white. Yet a certain charm of manner never leaves him altogether, and intoxication seems but to heighten his natural melancholy.

Said Beg is a personage of remarkable appearance, tall and thin, with slim, delicate hands and a waving

black beard gradually tapering to a point. He looks older than he is, and a slight cast in his mournful eyes gives him a faintly sinister look. He was clad, during our visit, in the finest black broadcloth, his dress consisting of full, baggy breeches embroidered with black silk, and a black Zouave jacket similarly embroidered. On his head he wore a black *aghal* over a white silk *keffiyeh*. Black top boots, lacing to just below the knee, completed his costume, the general effect of which was that of a Mephisto of the Russian ballet. No Bakst could have designed a more suitable outfit for the Lord of the votaries of Satan, nor could nature have endowed him with a more appropriate cast of countenance. That formidable dowager, his mother, who plainly despises her weakling son, was also at the castle ; and we visited this grim, handsome, upstanding woman in a lofty, smoke-blackened, raftered hall in the women's apartments, where, beside a blazing open fire, she was holding her court.

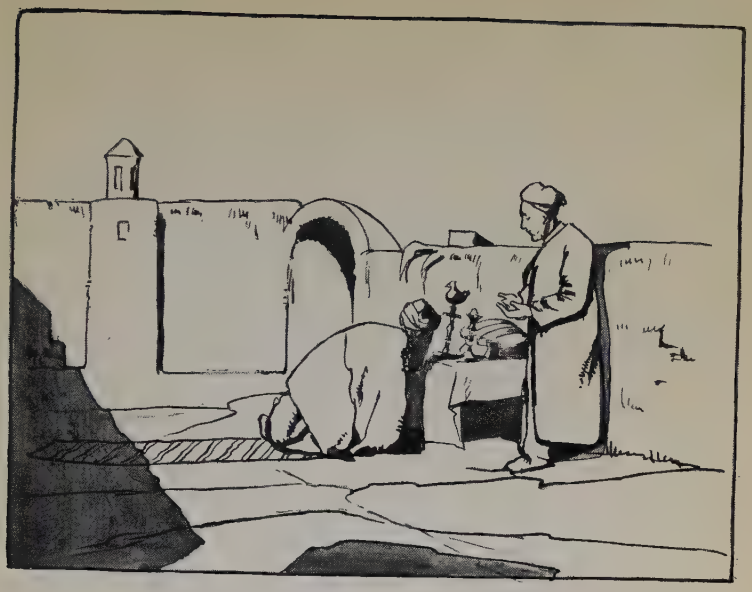
At night, in the *divan-khané*, our hosts provided for us the best-cooked native dinner I have ever, in a fairly wide experience, eaten in the East. All the dishes were oriental and were served on copper trays, unaccompanied by knives, forks or spoons ; the flat round bread of the country took the place of these. Generally eastern viands, many of which might otherwise be palatable, are spoiled—for me, at

all events—by being cooked in sheep's tail fat or in the equally horrible *samné*, a form of clarified butter resembling the Indian *ghi*. But here, in this fastness of devil-worshippers on the marches of Kurdistan, was set before us a meal with which not the most fastidious western palate could have found a fault. Its merits were enhanced by the circumstance that for picturesque interest the *mise-en-scène* could not have been bettered ; and, after the dishes had been cleared away, the Mir's gloriously apparelled body-guard, Telu and Jindi, the former a Nestorian, the latter a Yezidi, handed round a *chibuq* filled with the pungent tobacco of the country, the mouthpiece a singularly noble piece of dark brown amber.

On the following day, accompanied by the Beg's retainers, we rode over the hills to Sheikh 'Adi, a journey of three hours on horseback from Ba Idri. Soon we encountered a number of wayside shrines with the tapering fluted cones or spires (they can hardly be called domes), which are characteristic of Yezidi architecture. Beside each shrine there was generally a sacred tree enclosed by a wall ; for the Yezidis are nature-worshippers, and trees and water, stars and the moon compete with the sun and the Devil for their veneration. Presently we turned sharply from the valley we had been following into another valley that runs into it at right angles. In a few minutes we crossed a stream by a small stone

bridge and, as we did so, our Yezidi companions reverently removed their shoes. For we were now in sanctuary, in the *Haram* of the Yezidi holy place, not to be trodden by the faithful save with bare feet, in a region where no wild animal may be killed, no vegetation cut, no water polluted. It is a little paradise, this valley, of luxuriant groves and running water, of olives and pistachios, walnuts and figs, and silvery poplars beside the stream. The tender green of early spring was around us, and at our feet hyacinths and other wild flowers grew in abundance ; the sides of the valley were white with hawthorn and pink with almond-blossom. The shrine itself lies almost entirely hidden in a bower of giant mulberry trees, and a pergola of these shades with its foliage the court in front of the temple.

But amid all this sylvan and vernal loveliness is suddenly struck another note. Up the wall of the temple, to the side of the door, there climbs, evil and sinister, a shiny black serpent. He is only cut in stone, it is true, and his colour is merely black-lead ; but he comes as an abrupt reminder that here, despite the innocent charm of spring, the spirit of Apollyon broods. Other devices, such as lions, combs and hatchets, are carved in low relief on the façade, and inscriptions in Syriac and Arabic, some of them upside down, are let into the walls at various places around the court.



Yezidi Worshipping Melek Taus

Temple Court, Sheikh 'Adi

The custodian of Sheikh 'Adi, a cousin of Said Beg, welcomed us at the porch of the temple, but, before conducting us into the *arcana*, insisted that we should eat. Cushions and felt mats were placed for us against the temple façade, and black-shirted *fakirs* (an order of the Yezidi hierarchy [1]) hurried backwards and forwards with copper trays laden with eggs, pilau, hens and a sweet called *baqlawa*.[2] Then we went inside, removing our shoes at our hosts' request and placing, as they did, a small coin on the threshold.

[1] The *Kitab al-Jalweh* divides the Yezidi hierarchy into seven grades, which include *pirs*, *sheikhs*, *quchaqs* ("to whom is assigned the service of the cymbals, and celebrations, and song") and *qawals* ("to whom is delegated the duty of shrouding the dead and chanting religious litanies"). The *fakirs*, whose dress of black shirt, black turban, and white cotton drawers is supposed to have been that of Sheikh 'Adi himself, are the attendants at the sacred shrines, and it is their duty to dance at religious ceremonies. Most of these grades, if not all, are hereditary.

[2] *Baqlawa*, a rather sticky sweetmeat made of pastry and honey, is a very favourite dish in the Near and Middle East, as the following story will shew. A Turkish Grand Vizier once gave a dinner in Constantinople to a certain Ambassador. The dinner was ample, and, by the time that the *plat doux* (it was *baqlawa*) had arrived, the Ambassador could eat no more. "Supposing," asked the Grand Vizier, who noticed that his guest had passed the dish, "that you were in a very crowded apartment and that your king wanted to enter, what would you do?" "I would press against the others," said the Ambassador, "and make room for him somehow." "That is exactly what you must do," retorted the Grand Vizier, "for the *baqlawa*, who is the king of sweets."

As we entered, one of our escort, a Nestorian almost enveloped in bandoliers, whispered to me: "*Effendim*, this was once a church of ours, like Nebi Yunus at Ninweh." Probably he was right, for the building bears a general resemblance to the early Christian churches of these parts, and the account of the fifteenth century Nestorian monk, to which allusion has been made, is likely to rest on some foundation. The interior consists of barrel-vaulted twin naves, and is entirely unlighted. In a corner of the southern nave there rises a spring of beautifully clear water, the sacred spring of Zemzem, while from the middle of the northern nave a door leads into the Holy of Holies, a square chamber surmounted by the principal spire of Sheikh 'Adi. There is nothing in this room that in any way resembles an altar; its only contents are two draped wooden chests, one of them presumably the repository of the bronze peacock. More mysterious is the adjoining chamber, where is stored the olive oil used at the shrine. Ranged along the walls are rows upon rows of large earthenware jars, which looked, by the flickering light of our small tapers, as if they concealed the forty thieves.

There is no village at Sheikh 'Adi, but around and above the temple are hundreds of buildings, large and small, devoted to a variety of purposes. There are the dwellings of the custodian and his attendant

The Serpent, Sheikh 'Adi

Temple of the Sun, Sheikh 'Adi

fakirs, and rest-houses for the pilgrims who repair thither at the two great feasts of the Yezidi year. I asked one of our Yezidi attendants if Sheikh 'Adi was not liable to be plundered, between the pilgrimages, by the Kurds, whose villages lie all around the valley.

"No," said he; "the Kurds dare not set foot within our sanctuary. They fear the power of Melek Taus."

Minor shrines and oratories of all sizes and shapes, some of them set apart for pilgrims of particular localities, dot the valley on either side of the glen, and a little way up the southern slope rises the fluted spire of Sheikh Shems al-Dîn, the sun. From the roof of this lesser temple, where the white oxen are sacrificed to the tutelary god, we obtained a good view of the precincts, embowered in greenery and blossom. And at night, when every dome and eminence and grove and spire is illumined by flares of bitumen (for no lamps are allowed at Sheikh 'Adi, and the wicks for the flares are spun at the shrine), the effect is beautiful in the extreme. It seemed wrong that all this loveliness and light should be lavished on the Prince of Darkness; yet one could not but admit, if his shrine be any criterion, that he is a gentleman, and a gentleman of taste.

CHAPTER X

THE RETURN JOURNEY

I

THERE is nothing about the distant view of Baghdad that suggests the Arabian Nights except, perhaps, the twin golden domes of Kadhimein. Nor is there much, when the city is seen from within. The Baghdad of the Khalifs lay mainly, as has been said, on the western side of the Tigris, and the present Baghdad, which lies in greater part on the eastern side, only arose after the old city had been wiped out by the Mongols. Much more would, we may suppose, have survived the ravages of Hulagu Khan in 1258, had Baghdad been left alone thereafter by those wanton annihilators not only of lives and cities, but of works of irrigation—the one source of Babylonia's wealth—created by the toil and science of a hundred and more generations of men. While Baghdad was yet staggering under the effects of its sack by the aptly named Hulagu,[1] it received its deathblow from Timur the Lame, who destroyed it

[1] Hulagu is the Mongol word for "robber."

all but completely in 1393. The Baghdad, which arose after these scourges of mankind had passed away, was the pale shadow of its brilliant predecessor. Subsequent occupations by Persian monarchs did not tend to revive it, and its conquest by the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV. in 1638 heralded nearly three centuries of stagnation under the government of the Turks. But if the Turkish occupation contributed little to the architectural beauties of Baghdad, it added a gem to those of Constantinople. The delicate little Baghdad Kiosk, with which Sultan Murad embellished the Old Seraglio of the Turkish capital in commemoration of his conquest, is one of the masterpieces of the Turkish decorator and craftsman, singing from the heights of Stambul the swan-song of later Ottoman art.

It is difficult for one who did not know the pre-War Baghdad to realize how existence was possible for its citizens before the Turks, in 1916, carved a broad thoroughfare, parallel with the Tigris, through the maze of narrow little lanes and tortuous alleys, which otherwise constitute the town. New Street, hideous as it is with its mustard-coloured brick, its painted iron and its general resemblance to the commercial quarter of a second-rate Indian port, is Baghdad's only artery of traffic other than the Tigris itself. With few exceptions the streets, which it crosses at right angles, are far too narrow for carriage

or car ; and the kiosks of the houses, stained, as a rule, a dingy and singularly unattractive red, almost touch their vis-à-vis. Even in these older streets the brickwork is generally painted an ugly drab or yellow ; residential Baghdad is eminently unhappy in its colour scheme.

Pleasanter are the mosques and the bazaars. The latter, if not ancient, take much of their architectural character, and especially the strikingly shallow brick domes that surmount the cross-roads, from one of the few survivors of 'Abbasid Baghdad, the Mostansirié *medresé*. This college was founded in the thirteenth century by the Khalif al-Mostansir for the study of Qoranic law, and the builders of the *suq* could have followed no happier model. It is now incorporated in the bazaar and is used as a custom-house, while, near by, its noble contemporary, the Khan Orthma, is a storehouse for bales of cotton. On the whole, the bazaars of Baghdad are more interesting in their architecture and in those who frequent them than in their wares : the latter are nowadays, whatever they may have been in the past, frankly disappointing to those not in search of the manufactures of Europe and the United States. As for the mosques, it is necessary to bear in mind the breach in continuity between the Baghdad of the present day and that of the 'Abbasid Khalifs. Few are of earlier date than the seventeenth or eighteenth

Tomb of Sheikh Ma'ruf, Baghdad

Reputed Tomb of the Wife of Harun al-Rashid, Baghdad

centuries, and one looks among them in vain for examples of Arab art in its prime. Yet these later shrines preserve something of the old tradition, and they are not without a certain grace of their own. The bricks have mellowed to a soft brownish pink, and the domes are covered with tiles of a vivid turquoise blue. To compare the tiles of Baghdad with those of Constantinople and Jerusalem would be to compare the baroque of Ba'albek with the purity of the Parthenon ; even greater is the gulf between them and the faience of Konia and Brusa. But they provide a pleasant splash of colour, blending well enough with the tones of the brick ; and, if some of the domes have lost so many of their tiles that they look for all the world like a pate that has gone bald in patches, the gaps are filled, as in Mosul, by the nests of " Hajji Laklak," the pious and friendly stork. " What can the bald man owe to the barber's mother ? " asks the Punjabi proverb. What, I would ask, can the domes of Baghdad have owed to the Turkish Ministry of *Evqaf*[1] before the arrival of the British in ' Iraq ?

If Baghdad suggests modern India, the impress of its northern suburb Kadhimein is definitely Persian. It is not the Persia of Nadir Shah that we see here ; still less is it that of the golden Sassanid age. It is the more stolid, bourgeois Persia of the eighteenth

[1] Moslem Pious Foundations.

and early nineteenth centuries, the Persia of Fath 'Ali Shah and Hajji Baba. Kadhimein is almost, indeed, a Persian enclave, for those of the inhabitants who are not actually subjects of the Shah are for the most part of Persian blood. There is a Persian Consulate, situated, very conveniently, in the neighbourhood of the mosque—very conveniently, because the Consul is sometimes kind enough to allow visitors to survey from his roof the famous shrine of the seventh and ninth Imams, which Shiah intolerance closes to non-Moslems. The mosque is of the usual Shiah type, but is built on the heroic scale ; it is a blaze of gold, of pink and blue tiles, of mother-of-pearl and of mirrors, that completely conceal the material of the fabric. But the decoration is too lavish, is laid on with too heavy a hand. Unless the taste be perfect, it requires the mellowing touch of centuries to refine ornateness into magnificence, magnificence into beauty. And the taste of the builders and rebuilders of the mosque of Kadhimein, little of which is of earlier date than the last century, was anything but perfect. So, at least, it seems to me, who prefer to see stalactite vaulting in the original brick or stucco rather than overlaid with pieces of looking-glass. Nevertheless the effect, at a distance, of golden domes and gleaming minarets is a striking one ; and the great court with its riot of pink roses on blue tiles, with its seven porches barred by heavy

chains, is unquestionably impressive. The streets of tall Persian houses and eaves that almost meet have a decided charm ; and the people who throng them are an epitome of the Shiah world. Itinerant begging dervishes with alms-box of polished nut slung across sturdy shoulders, Seyyids, whose green turbans proclaim their descent from the Prophet, dour-looking *Mujtahids*[1] portentous with learning, mingle with unsophisticated pilgrims from the villages of Iran and with caravans of corpses of pious Persian Shiahs, brought for interment to the holy places of 'Iraq. And they, who derive their livelihood from the traffic in pilgrims alive and dead, are not the least numerous, not the least unprepossessing, of the dwellers around the tombs of the two Kadhims, reaping a rich harvest from those who aspire to the title, coveted by every good Shiah, of " Hajji, Kerbelai, Meshedi."

II

From Mosul to Baghdad, from Baghdad to Felluja,[2] where we crossed the Euphrates, and from Felluja to Ramadi the homeward route followed that of the outward journey. But from Ramadi, instead of

[1] The highest rank in the hierarchy of Shiah divines.

[2] Near Felluja is the battlefield of Cunaxa, where the defeat by King Artaxerxes II. of his rebel brother Cyrus the Younger in 401 B.C. led to the march of Xenophon to the Black Sea. *Cf.* p. 39.

turning westward into the desert, we followed the right bank of the Euphrates until we reached the Is of Herodotus, now the town of Hit.

Hit is a settlement of mud, built on a hill of mud, and it stands, according to some, on the site of the Garden of Eden. But if Hit was once Paradise, it is now a very tolerable imitation of Gehenna; and there is no doubt that its present master is Beelzebub, the Lord of Flies. It is a place of heat and of insect pests; and over it there brood, as a pall, the mephitic fumes of its only product, bitumen. Between the town and the bitumen wells there stretches a "blasted heath," arid and pitted like the surface of the moon—an abomination of desolation, compared with which the region of the Baku oil wells, which I had once thought to be the most forbidding spot on earth, positively teems with amenities. The atmosphere is laden with dust, and the sulphurous smells increase in intensity as one nears the wells, witches' cauldrons in very truth.

> "The earth has bubbles as the water has,
> And these are of them."

An inky liquid boils up in the vicious craters, and on the surface there collects slowly a filthy scum, thick, black and wrinkled like the skin of some monstrous pachyderm—the asphalt of commerce. But throw a match or a piece of burning paper into the pool, and the spectacle becomes at once one of

diabolic beauty. The flames run swiftly over the surface of the well as over a gigantic snap-dragon, now dying away, now blazing up with renewed fierceness as the geyser belches forth in black and oily bubbles its foul, combustible gases. Beware, however, of bending over the pools after the fires have burned themselves out. For then the fumes are deadly indeed, and he who inhales them is liable to lose consciousness and to fall, as has sometimes happened, into those wicked depths.

In favourable weather it is possible for a powerful motor-car to travel from Hit to Palmyra in twelve hours. But we were unfortunate. A sudden cloud-burst, by saturating the broadest of the *wadis* we had to cross, held us up for the night; and it was not until noon of the following day that we espied across the desert, standing bravely on the apex of a steep, conical hill, the Saracenic or Turkish castle which commands the oasis of Tadmor.

III

Civilization, not the civilization of motor-cars and of gold-plated teeth, but the civilization which built and peopled rich and flourishing cities, has receded in a remarkable manner from the Syrian desert and its Arabian borderlands. These inhospitable regions are still full of traces of epochs of prosperity, which did not necessarily begin with Roman rule nor end

with the Romans' departure. Jerash, indeed, and 'Amman and other cities of the Decapolis, Bosra in the Hauran, Tuba and its fellow-fortresses on the extreme eastern marches of Trans-jordania owe their buildings to Rome and, in the case of the Decapolis, their thought to Greece. On the other hand, Petra had been made great by the Arab Nabataeans before the Romans set foot in Arabia Petraea; while the palace of M'shatta, which has much to show notwithstanding the removal of a portion of its façade to Berlin in 1904, was only brought into being by Sassanids or Arabs in the sixth or seventh century A.D.

The greatest of these ancient cities of the desert was Tadmor, better known by its Greek and Roman name Palmyra. The ancient Palmyrenes, while speaking Aramaic, were Beduin Arabs, of the same stock as are their modern successors, the inhabitants of the Tadmor of to-day. But whereas these are poor, with no resources beyond the produce of their orchards and the gifts of travellers, they were rich, for a sudden deflection of trade-routes in the second century A.D. gave to their oasis the position of entrepôt of eastern commerce, which previously had been Petra's. Palmyra, like Petra, was an upstart, and both states, after a momentary flash of brilliance, expired as rapidly as they had arisen. But while some, at all events, of Petra's monuments—the

The Golden Domes of Kadhimein.

Palmyra and the Village of Tadmor

earlier Nabataean pylon tombs, for example—owed nothing to the art of Greece and Rome, Palmyra was purely imitative, was built to the order of its prosperous and uncritical population.

In the course of their journeys with their caravans the Palmyrenes had seen and admired the Graeco-Roman cities of Syria and the Mediterranean coast, and had decided to reproduce one of these, complete in every detail, on their native sands. Money was to them no object ; and, true *nouveaux riches* that they were, they demanded size and lavish display in preference to elegance and good taste. The period, too, was not favourable to the latter ; and thus there arose on this improbable site, rapidly, like a mushroom town of the American Far West, a costly, ponderous, sumptuous city, without grace, without variety, without inspiration. The same decoration is repeated everywhere ; the columns stretch for miles in monotonous uniformity, each with its bracket designed to support the statue of some successful merchant or leader of caravans. The sepulchral towers which surround and overlook Palmyra, true " towers of silence," if I may borrow the Parsee term, are its only Oriental feature ; but even here, if the design be Arab, the style and decoration are Graeco-Roman. Nevertheless, although genius is absent, there is undeniable grandeur : it was no small material and physical achievement to

raise a city on so vast a scale on the unstable sands of this remote oasis. It is with its anomalous situation, coupled with the colossal proportion of its monuments, that Palmyra makes its greatest claim to the admiration of the visitor. Doubtless it would excite interest were it situated in the plains of western Syria or in the fertile valleys of Anatolia. Here, rising abruptly from a sandy waste that is only separated from sheer desert by a narrow girdle of figs and pomegranates, it creates an effect that at first sight is almost bewildering.

When the Romans established themselves in Syria, Palmyra became their tributary, while retaining its autonomy in local affairs. Later, as its wealth increased with the elimination of Petra, it secured, under a native dynasty founded by one Odainath (Odenathus), a growing measure of independence. The defeat of the Emperor Valerian at Edessa in A.D. 260, and the feeble control exercised over the eastern provinces of the Empire by his successor Gallienus, gave to Septimius Odenathus, a descendant of the first Odainath, and to his vigorous and talented consort Zenobia the opportunity to enlarge their power. Appointed by Gallienus to be his viceroy in the East with the title of *dux Orientis*, Odenathus overran Syria, Arabia and a part of Asia Minor, theoretically in the name of the *fainéant* Emperor; and, after his assassination, his widow, as

regent for her young son, extended her sway from the banks of the Nile to the Asiatic shore of Bosphorus. The conquests of these early Arabs in settled, historical lands are not less astonishing in their magnitude because their effect was largely ephemeral. The Nabataeans of Petra twice included Damascus in their dominions; and even more remarkable is the fact that Zenobia and her son, Beduin Arabs from a crossing of caravan routes, governed Egypt as Augusta and Augustus. But the ambitious queen had overreached herself. It was this assumption of the Imperial title, marking as it did the definite rejection of the Roman allegiance, that brought the Palmyrene *épopée* to an end. It decided the Emperor Aurelian to reassert the authority of Rome over the East, which his predecessors had allowed to slip from their hands; and the last act of the drama, as all the world knows, shews Zenobia, defeated at last after a career of almost unparalleled success, gracing the triumph of the victorious Caesar. The curtain goes down on a peaceful villa at Tibur, where the exiled queen, always a friend of learning, spends her last years in philosophical and religious discussions. So, twelve centuries later, did her sister in misfortune, Queen Katharine Cornaro, end her days in her villa at Asolo, a patron of art and of the scholars of the Renaissance.

As the name Petra is now lost to the Beduin of the neighbourhood of the " rose-red city," who know the place only as Wadi Musa, the Valley of Moses, so has Palmyra, to the Arabs who inhabit it, become Tadmor once again. The village of Tadmor is a collection of squalid, dirty mud houses, huddled inside the enclosing wall of the great temple of the sun-god Bel. If these puny hovels mask and conceal some of the detail, they certainly emphasize the dimensions of this formidable monument, in the best preserved portion of which, the *cella* of the temple, is housed, not inappropriately, the modern mosque. The Sheikh of the village is an artless old Bedu, a very different " Ras Tadmor " from the warrior who held that dignity more than sixteen hundred years ago. Yet to him, too, there clings the faint shadow of romance. In his youth a Frenchwoman of position, the relative, it is said, of some President of the Republic, was attracted, while on a visit to Palmyra, by his appearance, and persuaded him to accompany her to Paris. So, emulating in the contrary sense Lady Ellenborough and Lady Hester Stanhope, whose fancy led them eastward, this son of the desert followed his Egeria to the West. But after a sojourn of ten months he could bear its gloomy clime no longer, and returned, never to leave it again, to his house of mud in the temple of the sun.

IV

It is not without a certain fitness that the humble holder of a shrunken dignity should be the tailpiece of this little book. The journey I have endeavoured to describe was, in the main, a journey among peoples who have fallen from a high estate. Some of them, but not all, are able to find consolation for an anxious and perilous present in the recollection of a glorious past ; few can derive much encouragement from the prospects of the future. My story has been one of contrasts : contrasts of fortune, contrasts of faith, contrasts not wholly complimentary to our boasted civilization. There is much that surprises, there is much to be learned in this venerable corner of the world ; there are things that may amuse, things that will shock. But be it remembered that through fragments of its all but forgotten races there still whispers faintly the voice of mighty achievements ; that customs and beliefs, linking the twentieth century A.D. to eras, of which few living traces remain, still lurk beneath the veneer of modern progress in the lands about Mosul.

What if the Beduin of mid-desert flash golden smiles ; if the ruler of the votaries of Satan is made mobile by a fleet of Fords ; if one of our Gardens of Eden more closely resembles hell ; if the other, no longer the abode of peace, is a bone of contention

with the Turks? Despite the anomalies and anachronisms, in which this strange region abounds, we have ample material, wherewith "to quicken the memory and the fancy, to stimulate speculation, and to inform judgment." It is not altogether without significance that the successors of Barhebraeus reckon their years from the capture of Babylon by a Macedonian general, and that there yet reigns, albeit over a sadly diminished flock, the heir to the traditions of Prester John.

GLOSSARY

A. = Arabic.
P. = Persian.
R. = Russian.
S. = Syriac.
T. = Turkish.

antikaji (T.), dealer in antiquities.

aba (A.), outer cloak of silk, wool, camel-hair or goat-hair.

'aghal (A.), cord of camel-hair or wool bound round the *keffiyeh* (*q.v.*)

'ashiret (A.), clan ; sept ; tribe (especially with reference to the Nestorians of the Hakkiari Mountains).

chibuq (T.), Turkish pipe with long straight stem.

divan, *divan-khané* (P.), formal court or reception, and place where these are held ; guest-chamber.

Estrangelo (S.), the earliest form of the Syriac script.

firman (P.), official Commission, Patent or rescript.

Haram (A.), a sacred place ; sanctuary.

Karshuni (S.), Arabic written in Syriac characters.

keffiyeh (A.), white or coloured silk cloth worn by Arabs on the head and fastened by the *'aghal* (*q.v.*).

keif (A.), a state of blissful relaxation.

malik (S.), Chief of a Nestorian clan.

Mar (fem. *Mart*) (S.), Saint ; Lord (applied to Bishops).

medresé (A.), School or college of Qoranic Law.

millet (A.), non-Moslem subject nation of Moslem States.

Mir (P.), Prince ; ruler ; chieftain.

Nebi (A.), Prophet ; messenger from God.

Pehlevi (*i.e.* Parthian), A script in which the ancient Persian language was represented in a garb partially Semitic.

qasha (S.), Priest.

rabban (S.), monk ; *rabbanta*, nun.

Raskolnik (R.), Russian dissenter ; sectary.

rayah (A.), Member of non-Moslem tributary *millet* (*q.v.*).

sanjaq (T.), banner ; standard ; palladium.

Serto (S.), West Syriac writing.

Sheitan (A.), Satan.

Sufi (A.), Moslem mystic.

suq (A)., bazaar.

tell (A.), hill ; mound.

wadi (A.), valley ; stream

ziggurat, Babylonian and Assyrian temple-tower with spiral inclined path.

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